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**An Analysis of English Philology Undergraduates' Compulsory Literature  
Reading Experiences at Polish Universities**

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The Open University, 2010**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this dissertation is to report and analyse how the students of English Philology at two Polish universities talk about their understanding and evaluation of the aims and outcomes of the teaching of the History of English Literature during their first year of study. I provide background information about the degree in English Philology, and the changing status of the English language and of English Philology graduates in Poland. My aim is to consider their experiences of the courses in comparison with the goals of those courses, and more general ideas about the value of an education in the Humanities

**Key words:** English Philology, status, intellectuality, survey course in English literature, literature reading, literature as knowledge



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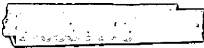
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## CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

### 1. 1. Education, intellectualism and knowledge in Poland

Education, intellectualism and knowledge have always retained high value in Polish society. Although one could talk about Polish society being historically divided into peasantry, nobility, proletariat and intelligentsia as the four classes (Gella 1989), the Polish and Hungarian sociologists Kolosi and Wnuk-Lipiński (1983) and Wesółowski (1979) argue that the stratification of communist societies could best be described as a *status* order deriving from differentiation in education, occupation and income. It is important to underline the significance of the link between education and status here, since, in an economy which for decades disallowed private enterprise, occupation and income were normally determined by one's level of education. There could be an analogy drawn here with Bourdieu's connection between the limited access to material capital and the increased interest in cultural capital in the former GDR (1998, pp.15-16). An important point to make is that traditionally it had been specifically Polish nobility who went to universities (often abroad) and who spoke foreign languages. Their status was not just achieved through education, but also through adhering to certain values, manners and lifestyles. Due to the collaborative effort of the Nazis and the Soviets the Polish nobility were practically wiped out, and so were its values, manners and lifestyles. The contemporary Polish intelligentsia seems to perform the double role of the heir to the nobility and a form of the Western middle-classes. Becoming a member of the intelligentsia is subject solely to one's level and choice of education.

### 1.2. Degrees in English Philology

English Philology is a popular degree which used to be offered as a five-year course, but in the last 15 years, most universities have switched to a 3+2 system. The 3 year element is referred to as English Philology Grade 1 where, on completion (which entails an exam and the submission of a thesis), the graduates are awarded the title of a *licencjat* (equivalent to B.A.) and can progress to Grade 2 which eventuates in the degree of *magister* (equivalent to M.A.). Most Polish universities are accredited to offer Grade 1 courses, but there are restrictions as to which universities are permitted to offer Grade 2, mainly on the basis of the staff profile in the departments. The undergraduate and MA courses are very similar at most universities as they are regulated by the benchmarking statements by the Polish Ministry of Education. Polish English Philology, seemingly in alliance with the broader European philological tradition, aspires to expose graduates to a comprehensive knowledge of all strands of the 'study of English'. The degree consists of various subjects, mainly compulsory, which appear throughout the course, ranging from linguistics and applied linguistics, the history of the English language, literary and cultural studies, and British and US history), ELT methods and practice, and translation. There is also a large component of so-called 'Practical English', which caters for the teaching of the four language skills. Some English Philology departments postpone any form of specialisation until postgraduate level, while others place students into particular groups (for example 'teachers' or 'translators') at the very beginning of their studies. Most



departments also organise courses which are regarded as less

important and have less emphasis put on them, although in most cases they are also compulsory, for example Latin or introduction to psychology and philosophy. The lectures, tutorials and seminars are delivered in the vast majority of cases in English.

#### **1.2.1. The changing status of the degrees in English Philology**

Until recently a Masters degree in English Philology was one of the most prestigious degrees in Polish Humanities. Studying English Philology in Poland, regardless of one's choice of university, comes with an additional set of associated benefits. Nowadays, in line with the profiles of English in Europe discussed by Berns (2009), competence and fluency in participating in the aspects of social life which are facilitated by international English like media, pop culture, travel, etc. cannot be disregarded and are often a source of pride (or snobbery) and prestige, especially for a young adult whose parents grew up on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Traditionally, the benefits of studying English Philology have been even greater – almost exclusive by comparison with the rest of the society. Firstly, there used to be only ten universities which offered degrees in English Philology, and the overall number of graduates per year was no more than three hundred – remarkably few for one of the larger nations in Europe. Secondly, the enrolment was carried out on the basis of a very competitive exam, written and oral, usually at advanced level. English was taught in few schools and mostly at elementary level so English Philology was only accessible to students whose parents could afford to pay for years of expensive private tuition. Consequently, if one had a degree in English

Philology, one could earn considerably above the national average by offering private tuition. It was common for English Philology graduates to be employed in foreign trade, logistics or banks, on the assumption that it was more rare and difficult to be fluent in English than to learn about, for example, economics. On the flip side, it was very uncommon for English Philology graduates to work in schools, as they had plentiful other, more lucrative career options. Fluency in English was synonymous with accessing cultural products like Shakespearean drama or Byron's poetry, which are commonly believed in Poland to be an essential part of the world's cultural legacy and are therefore very highly regarded. Lastly, for academics and those whose employment required it, a degree in English Philology was a legitimate reason to be permitted to have a passport and travel to the West.

Since the evolution of the political system in Poland, English Philology has been gradually losing its aura of exclusivity. The government decided to replace Russian with English in schools and employed various measures to facilitate that. Several other universities opened English Philology departments and then semi-privatised teacher training colleges sprang up (of which there are currently 72) which prepare students for the licencjat with a specialisation in teaching. These undergraduates are subsequently able to apply to study at master's level at a university. Teacher training colleges aim at delivering similar course programmes to those which operate at universities, although from my experience as someone who worked for a teacher training college and then interviewed and employed teacher training college graduates, this

target is in the majority of cases markedly over-ambitious. The common consensus is that candidates who are less proficient in English apply to study in the teacher training colleges, though they graduate with roughly the same degree. Finally, in the last two decades Poland has experienced an enormous growth in the number of private English language schools (and an influx of teachers from English-speaking countries) who offer courses for all ages and levels. It is, therefore, fairly common for university students to enrol for private English courses alongside their University course. As a result, Poland has a growing contingent of professionals who have a degree in law or economics and a certificate or a diploma in English. This situation requires the English Philology graduates of today to find a niche in the professional market, other than English teaching at schools which does not bring the desirable prestige and income, and in which their expertise will be unrivalled and exclusive. To utilize their degrees and their acquired knowledge to that effect seems a challenge. Consequently, in contrast to 'a growing interest in English Studies' for example in Bulgaria and Romania (as reported by Gupta (2009, p.17)) Polish universities have been experiencing a decline in the numbers of candidates for English Philology, and, in general, in their fluency in English. The link here seems quite clear: the more Poles succeed in learning English in schools, abroad and on private courses, the fewer want to study it academically.

### 1.3. English literature at Polish universities

A specialisation in English literature offers an obvious opportunity to create such a niche. However, English literature<sup>1</sup> is not offered at any Polish university as a separate course leading to a degree, which may already suggest that it is not perceived as a viable career option. Instead, the history of English literature is one of the compulsory subjects in all English Philology departments. What is understood as the history of English literature is perhaps best illustrated by an extract from the course aims and objectives published by a Polish university, one which resembles all the others available online<sup>2</sup>:

An extensive overview of the chronological development of English prose, poetry and drama from Old English to contemporary, will be presented during lectures. Emphasis will be put on the characteristics of literary periods and genres as well as on discussion of canonical English literature, which has shaped English, American and world culture. Tutorials have been designed to give the students an opportunity to analyse and interpret prose and poetry. Participants are to master elementary terminology used to discuss literature and practice their analytical and interpretative skills.

What is considered the 'English canon' is decided by the Polish Ministry of Education. The 'chronological' and overview approach that is generally taken to the teaching of literature in English Philology suggests that university authorities might see it as an element of general knowledge 'about English', providing a historical and cultural background. It seems worthwhile to investigate students' expectations and thinking about this type of course programme,

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<sup>1</sup> or any other literature.

<sup>2</sup> Which is to be expected as these aims and objectives are strictly regulated by the Polish Ministry of Education in their General Benchmarking Statement for Degrees in Philology

Philology is experiencing at the moment.

#### 1.4. Aims of this study

Talking about the education of teachers in the USA, Culler argues that 'in dealing with the cultural formation of today's undergraduates, Ph.Ds whose professional training has consisted of rigorous grounding in philology and a comprehensive chronological survey of English literature may be quite badly equipped for the tasks they face' and suggests that 'proper professional preparation ought perhaps to involve something other than a reimposition of the tough requirements and high standards of yesteryear' (2001, p. 238). Since some form of the teaching of literature seems to be a ubiquitous element of contemporary education, Culler's suggestion seems worth investigating, but possibly the departure point for this investigation should be to consider first *why* we teach literature in Polish universities, and only then should thoughts about methods and programmes follow. Is literature teaching a form of advanced literacy teaching, is it an element of cultural studies, a course in stylistics, a social pursuit, professional training for pre-service teachers or a course for future academics?

There is a growing body of literature which deals with literary reception in different contexts: universities (Harper 1988), schools (Gebhard 2006), TESOL classrooms (Edmondson 1997), book groups (Allington and Swann 2009), and online chat-rooms (Allington 2007). Although these studies consistently report that books, reading and discussing literature are valued, there seem to be few studies which result in clear findings about how such claims are justified. If

literature should be taught, then what is the practical rationale for doing so? If teaching literature at university eventuates in a degree and a qualification, how should it be labelled? Are the arguments for teaching English (and other foreign) literature in the original language at Polish universities broadly educational in the sense of creating awareness of and allowing familiarization with it, or are they specifically professional or linguistic? There is very little research available which has considered students' opinions on these questions. To obtain and investigate Polish students' responses as stakeholders in this process, and to propose findings which may have an implication for designing future course programmes, will be the aim of this study.

#### **1.5. Research questions**

Designing a university course programme or a syllabus is demanding and challenging. It requires a vast theoretical knowledge and calls for a pragmatic approach which will afford an awareness of which elements of a given discipline are crucial, which ones are desirable, and which ones can be left aside for future consideration. Indeed, there is also to be considered the overwhelming burden of the responsibility to give justice to a whole host of knowledge, information and creativity which humanity has developed and displayed throughout millennia, and to educate cohorts of young people who rely on university authorities and academics to provide them with the best, the most adequate preparation for their futures. Even the very question of where to start – i.e. of the point at which advances in knowledge and our heritage become relevant to the contemporary world – seems to pose a considerable dilemma, and

justifiably so. In view of this potential crisis of confidence, resorting to an established recipe seems a very tempting solution. The literary canon might be a very good example of this. Therefore my research questions are:

1. *How do Polish students of English Philology justify to themselves the fact that they study the History of English Literature as a compulsory subject at undergraduate level?*
2. *What do students report as the outcomes of their study of the History of English Literature, and do they rate it as a positive or negative experience?*

#### **1.6. Rationale for choosing the research topic**

I have chosen to concentrate on an element of the Polish Higher Education system for a number of reasons. I am Polish and I have gone through every step of formal Polish education from the age of 6 to 24. I have also been involved in education from the 'other side' as a teacher training college tutor, a secondary school English teacher in the public sector, and as a teacher, manager, director of studies and consultant in private English schools. Additionally, as a pupil and student I experienced the school system in Poland both before and after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and therefore witnessed universities' attempts to transform themselves in response to the new circumstances. Therefore, even though there might be several epistemological problems with the concept of an insider, I judge myself as someone who can claim commonality of experience with, comprehension of, and insight into the Polish educational system. I would also argue that because of our common upbringing

and tradition, I could be considered to share a similar mentality with the students I interviewed for this project.

Higher Education in Poland is a fascinating example of a system which endeavours to cater for the requirements, ambitions and perhaps complexes of a nation which has always been geographically, historically and culturally on the crossroads between East and West, and constantly feels the need to prove that it *is* in Europe (and Central Europe at that, not Eastern Europe). A further point of interest is that I have elected to research the attitudes of students who have opted to study the English language and British and/or American culture, which enables me to examine the role of Anglophilia in the already existing Eastern-Western dichotomy. Therefore, I would argue that the need to revisit the educational assumptions and syllabuses which I propose to research will resonate in many other educational contexts, and that my findings will not only be relevant locally, but perhaps in a wider range of contexts, certainly within the European Union.



## CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I will survey the existing literature from a number of fields to present various perspectives that have been used to understand the ways in which students may conceptualise the study of English literature. These fields include higher education studies, reception study, and the pedagogy of literature. Examining literature from these fields helps us to understand what motivates readers generally, and students specifically, to read literature, how they relate to the literature that they read, and how their reading experiences can be affected by such factors as the purpose of their reading, their literary and linguistic background and training, and the difficulty or ease (both intellectual and emotional) they experience while reading. It also points to various factors which need to be taken into account while attempting to unpack and interpret the students responses to the interview questions.

### 2.1. Literarische Bildung in European education

For the purposes of the Council of Europe, Pieper (2006) sketches a general overview of the European tradition of the teaching of literature by grounding it in the concept of *literarische Bildung*. Pieper argues that 'a common consensus can be identified in modern [European] societies with reference to *literarische Bildung* that it can be specified with regard to cultural life. The learning with literature should allow for personal development within a cultural context' (p.6). Notably, Pieper makes her argument in a political and regulatory environment, and therefore her notion of *Bildung* may be more defined and practical than it often is in an academic

environment. In contrast, Wood relates the original Hegelian concept of *Sichbildung* where 'one's spirit deepens through thought' (1998, p.3), and Mortensen adds to this definition an important point of reference for the achievement of this spiritual deepening by saying that this process of formation of an individual *has no goal outside itself* (Mortensen, 2002, p. 441, emphasis added).

## 2.2. Literature and moral pedagogy

How a student and a reader *should* draw on their encounters with literature, and how they *think* they should draw on the experience of reading literature, has been the subject of much research as well as of theoretical consideration. In the introductory chapter to *Discourse and Literature*, Cook (1994) attempts to answer these questions by first arguing what literature is *not*. One of his theories points to the obsolete nature of the status of literature as a didactic and moralistic tool. Strothmann and Van Fleet's (2009) as well as Newell's (2000) studies on how students view literature seem to contradict this rejection of moral pedagogy. Strothmann and Van Fleet present the findings of a quantitative study of statements by the users of the University of Oklahoma library in response to the questionnaires distributed during the Books That Inspire exhibition. The questionnaires asked the visitors to describe 'books that have enlightened, inspired, or influenced the lives and careers of the readers' (2009, p.163). Strothmann and Van Fleet report that 'Self-Improvement and Living Righteously' was the second most frequently referred to theme, in which they identified 'heroes and life models', 'morals and values' and 'introspection/ self-examination' as the main categories (p.167). Similarly, Newell analysed the data from

and reports statements which suggest that the majority of respondents expected books to 'be able to teach moral lessons' or even 'be watch-dogs over moral decadence' (p.51). These two studies suggest that perhaps in contrast to some theorists of literary studies, who are keen to distance themselves from this pedagogical aspect of reading, many readers still expect books to have this quality, and many judge this to be what makes a book worth reading. The results of these two studies may have been biased by the impact of religion on American and Ghanaian societies, and this seems an issue that could be investigated further both from a literary reception as well as an ethnographic point of view. This may also be relevant to studies of reading habits and preferences in Poland, where a large part of the society still adheres to Catholic traditions and values.

### **2.3. Reader response and literary training**

Another important concept which could be consistently linked with the topic of literature reception is the reader's affective response. Da Costa Fialho (2007, p. 107, citing Miall and Kuiken [2001, p. 300]) and Van Peer, Hakemulder and Zyngier (2007), argue that literature may be an important instrument in the elaboration and evolution of our feelings, and that the equally important cognitive and evaluative processes which are engaged in responding to the work-of-art collaborate in developing a reader's 'aesthetic perspective' (p.107). The question which seems to arise in response to these theories is whether these processes and the development of an aesthetic perspective occur as a spontaneous or perhaps even automatic reaction to reading a work of literature, or whether they can be

prompted and fostered. It seems that aesthetic responses to

literature will indeed occur naturally insofar as they are experienced by readers who have not had any formal training in literary studies, for example young children. However, I would argue that a major point of literary studies and training itself is to enable the reader to develop a literary culture which engages with the sort of literature he or she would not have an interest in accessing without the literary training. Admittedly, the employment of such a definition in an educational context leads to a number of problems with regard to the assessment of this development, or whether it, in fact, should be assessed at all. Currently, in the majority of educational environments, reading skills and repertoires are often 'verified' by means of a formal assessment of the students' written discussion of them. Therefore it is not clear whether literary training itself is sufficient in this respect, or whether it should be supported by the teaching of oracy and writing skills. What is more, it is entirely possible that a student successfully masters the 'schooled' language required to discuss literature with very little experience of reading at all. However, Bortolussi and Dixon (1996) claim 'to provide rigorous experimental evidence on the relationship between literary training and literary expertise' (p.471). Their study of two groups of students, each of which received formal training in the interpretation of a different genre of literary text, seems to suggest clearly that the trained ability of students to critically assess and interpret texts of a specific genre increased their understanding of them, and their willingness to reread and engage with them.

What remains an important implication here is the effect formal literary training may have on the recipients. Arguably, it is not the purpose of literary training to teach a student to like all literature, but to equip him or her with the tools to judge it on a number of levels, rather than just on the grounds of 'like' or 'dislike'. Zyngier and Shepherd (2003) conclude that the Brazilian undergraduates who participated in their study did not seem to support the idea that their reactions to the literature they were exposed to at the university were affective or emotional. The only emotions they experienced were negative, mainly due to the fact that the teaching of literature they experienced was instrumental and did not encourage them to relate themselves on a personal level to what they read. Similarly, Poyas (2004) states that '[In Israel] classroom literary discourse is meant to arrive at a commonly accepted meaning of the studied text' and proposes to establish how in this context 'teachers bridge the gap between the world of a canonical literary text, its traditional interpretations, and the students' contemporary worlds' (p.63). Poyas concentrated in her study on two teachers with two different teaching philosophies and styles. She informs us that while the teacher who fostered the students' competence as independent readers was much more successful in eliciting personal responses to the literary text in the classroom, it was the more teacher-centred, more based-upon-established-knowledge approach that was successful in preparing students for final exams.

#### 2.4. Literature as information

This problematic does not seem specific to the teaching of literature and resonates through various disciplines which contribute towards the theory and philosophy of education. Pépin (1998) states that 'received truths provide the basis for most teaching programmes. The belief that it is possible for a subject to understand and assimilate some bit of knowledge which has been mastered by another subject is without a doubt the main basis of our customary representation of education' (p.174). Pépin rejects this theory and proposes the constructionist approach instead. Knowledge only becomes knowledge when it can be demonstrably verified as a solution, explanation, answer, etc. that the learner finds useful in a given situation. In this sense, reducing the gap between what a student knows and what a student *should* know, which is usually how education and subject curricula are defined, does not appear like a valid educational goal any more. What is more, it seems questionable whether there is a direct transfer between such theoretical assumptions behind educational curricula and students' educational needs.

#### 2.5. Approaches to literature in Foreign Language Teaching

Kramsch and Kramsch (2000, p.568) discuss the changing role that literature has played in foreign language teaching in the twentieth century. They argue that:

... literature has been used for the aesthetic education of the few (1910s), for the literacy of the many (1920s), for moral and vocational uplift (1930s-1940s), for ideational content (1950s), for humanistic inspiration (1960s-1970s), and finally for providing an 'authentic experience' of the target culture (1980-1990s)

This overview seems to imply that the teaching of foreign literature has been both ideological and utilitarian at the same time. This, again, refers us back to the permanent conflict of pragmatic and philosophical attitudes towards literature. What is more, Kramsch and Kramsch's article does not provide a prediction for the fate of the teaching of foreign literature in the twenty-first century, and whether newer concepts like literary competence or academic literacy will have important implications for it.

## **2.6. Literary competence and academic literacy**

While Culler (2001) warns that the definition of literary competence is still an open matter which can be defined by what it does *not* signify, i.e. that it is not synonymous with 'competent' reading in the sense of one that arrives at correct and normative interpretations (pp.55-56), Weller (2010) argues that in the humanities 'the capacity to demonstrate proficient literacy skills is frequently regarded as a default requirement for participation in Higher Education' and, simultaneously, an inevitable outcome of study at university that occurs without deliberate teacher intervention (p. 88). Weller suggests that universities do not tend to view students' literacy or literary training as their responsibility. If a student's level of academic literacy is not proficient enough to participate in a course, that is for him or her to rectify. If neither of these assumptions is realistic, then we are faced with a situation in which the student is doomed to falter in achieving the goals of literary education: lack of literacy skills will have a knock-on effect on the student's ability for critical thinking and might considerably distort their ability to develop an aesthetic judgement and engage with the

research as it is not only literacy but also literacy in a foreign

language that is required from the students in order to read English

literature at a Polish university. It is vital to appreciate fully the degree

of difficulty that students might experience in engaging with this

literature. There are two crucial implications that demand to be

discussed on that point. Firstly, the idea that literature can be an

invaluable tool in foreign language teaching has already been widely

discussed and accepted (Brumfit and Carter (1986), Eagleton (1983),

Short (1989), Widdowson (1975)). However, I would argue that the

idea that an extensive chronological reading course in English

literature throughout centuries, as advertised by English Philology

departments in Poland, could be successfully employed for that

purpose is worth further inspection. Secondly, the linguistic difficulty

will have an effect on their emotional reactions. Andrade and

Williams report that 75% of students they tested admitted to

continuous anxiety-related symptoms in ELT classes, and 11% of

those experienced 'debilitating aspects of anxiety [which] strongly

hindered their performance (2009, p.1). These experiences will not

have a negative impact on their linguistic performance only (although

this cannot be neglected), but also on their attitudes to the literature

which provokes such anxiety. This seems to imply a possible

negative consequence of their literary training, which could defy its

purpose.



**2.7. 'Canonical' subjects in Higher Education**

Knights (2005) provides an interesting discussion of such high expectations in Arts and Humanities and argues that university authorities tend to decide on subject curricula so as to give the impression that their discipline are difficult, hard to access, perhaps suitable only for an elite. Knights also notes that academic disciplines which require a familiarisation with a canon display those characteristics particularly strongly. The literature suggests that this approach has a significant influence on the formation of a student identity, the feeling of belonging or rejection, generally and within a particular discipline. Knights describes it as 'refashioning of the student identity' (p.51) and sees it as one of the most important characteristics of contemporary Higher Education, where social 'membership', 'instrumental rationality' and employment prospects (p.52) become more important than the process of studying, or where studying becomes a marginal supplement. Knights also identifies the existence of 'scripts' in the context of Higher Education, specific to each discipline. These scripts become a formula for 'socialisation into a student role [which] involves learning certain scripts and identifying with the behaviours associated with the script' (p.35). What follows is that it is on the basis of a student's success with those scripts (for example, learning *what* is the official interpretation of a poem, rather than the tools of *how* to interpret it) that his or her overall performance is assessed. Therefore, personal engagement with a work of literature becomes a redundant practice, and familiarisation with the 'script' a tempting and rewarding shortcut.

### **2.8.1. Reader identity and student identity**

Following the theme of identity and self-image in research on reading for academic purposes, Mann (2000) describes her research as an attempt to 'understand the meaning that reading in the academic context has for the individual student' (p.297). She argues that reading for pleasure is significantly different from reading for academic purposes. The former involves a comfortable, private, pressure-free activity. The latter is 'disturbed' (p.297) by the fact that it is usually done for the purposes of assessment. The content of the texts read for academic purposes, in most cases, needs to be assimilated and then reproduced, usually in a written form. Therefore, the 'outcome' of reading for academic purposes becomes a springboard for the outside world to invade readers' privacy, and tell them something about their intellect and ability. While reading may be more and more commonly seen as no longer a purely neutral cognitive activity, our understanding of the process which governs the projection of such evaluations and their impact on attitude to education is still very limited.

### **2.8.2. Reader identity and social status**

In terms of a geographical and political reference, I have used Bukodi's recent quantitative data (2007) on readership in Hungary. Bukodi draws a strong link between education, social status and readership in contemporary Hungary. She makes a number of references to Weber (1968/1922) in order to highlight the crucial distinction between social class and social status, and to comment on the status of education in communist and post-communist

countries. Bukodi concludes that only individuals at the top of the status hierarchy possess an adequate amount of educational and financial resources to consume the most 'canonised' forms of culture; in this case, serious literature and work-related non-fiction texts (p.112).

### **2.9. Literature in Polish schools**

Tulasiewicz and Adams (1998) discuss the teaching of Polish in pre-EU Poland in the light of the political and economical changes, which could provide an interesting contrast and analogy. Awramiuk (2002) talks about the reforms to the whole educational system in Poland which have been implemented on the primary and secondary level, and argues that the new directions encompass 'teaching the reading of texts, not teaching about texts, updating reading-list titles to create motivation for reading and considering pupils' interests and needs' (p.173). Nevertheless, very little has been written about Polish students in English Philology departments, and such literature in the English language is at the moment practically non-existent.

## **CHAPTER THREE – METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

### **3.1. Theoretical positioning**

I relied on some flexibility in the current definitions of qualitative research in order to position my study within its tradition (Blaxter, Hughes, Tight 2006). Although I cannot claim to have done a fully ethnographic study, the assumptions of my research design are compatible with some of its approaches (Oakley 1996) in as much as the analysis presented here will be descriptive and will generate conclusions in the form of hypotheses, rather than be factual, numerical and conclusive. The interviews were conducted in an informal, conversational fashion, without a rigid questionnaire-like structure. The questions asked during the interviews were designed to investigate my research questions, but the interviewees were given an opportunity to talk about issues which were relevant to them. The interviews were concerned with the participants' experiences and their understanding and descriptions of their actions. Also, although the interviews were recorded over a short period of time, the other data used in the study has involved researching documents and reviewing literature which provide a long-term perspective on the position of education and English literature in Poland.

### **3.2. Sources of data**

In this study, the data has been mainly obtained through two recorded semi-structured group interviews (there were five interviewees in one group and six in the other). Apart from the researcher's interaction with the research subjects, ethnographic

methods also often rely on long-term observation and the researchers' status as an 'insider' in the group which is being studied. My claim to the latter is justified in Chapter 1. However, a long-term observational element of this study was not feasible due to the combination of three factors:

1. the nature of the MRes course, mainly to the short gap between the taught part of the course and the process of data analysis,
2. the fact that this research was conducted abroad,
3. the fact that the History of English Literature in English Philology departments is a short winter-term course (i.e. one which ended before data collection for this study could be commenced)

Despite the impossibility of long-term observational study, it was possible to collect policy documents (submitted as appendices in this dissertation), with the aim of rectifying this shortage by augmenting the researcher's and the reader's background information and understanding of the setting in which the students study English Literature. However, since this study was predominantly aimed at interpreting the *students'* reading experiences, the policy documents included were not used in analysis, but solely as a point of reference.

Therefore, my analysis will be mainly based on the transcripts from these interviews. In Chapter Five and Six, I provide a number of quotations some of which have been shortened and edited for reasons of space, but always represent the words actually used by the students. The quotations have been selected in such a way as to represent the opinions of all the interviewees as well as the full range

of their responses. I did not focus on the sequencing of utterances, which would be important in Discourse Analysis and critical in Conversation Analysis. Instead, I extracted responses which were relevant to my *research questions* regardless of the actual *interview question* which elicited them (and its timing in the interview). I would argue that this organisation was useful because it enabled me to collect together the different ways in which particular matters were conceptualised by the students.

The interviewees did not participate in the research design process and their responses were improvised, spontaneous and digressive. Also the interactive character of a group interview invited them to revise their opinions in reaction to what was said by the others. This meant that issues relevant to my research questions were revisited unpredictably throughout the interviews. Collecting comments in this way helped me to see the ways in which my own assumptions did not match the students' understandings. An important instance of this was that the students' responses displayed a much less clear distinction between 'reasons for studying' and 'outcomes of studying' than my research questions had assumed. That is, the reasons they gave for studying a topic took the form of hoped-for outcomes, and they seemed to equate having studied the topic with having achieved those outcomes. This point would have been lost if I had not collected together a range of comments relevant to reasons and outcomes.

Although I do not cite them in the analytical chapter, I also briefly refer throughout this dissertation to various secondary sources of data and background information: the e-mail exchanges I had with

some of the staff at three Polish universities, to various documents (mostly included as appendices) such as syllabi, course programmes, literature teaching aims and objectives published by English Philology departments online, and Polish Ministry of Education benchmarking statements for Higher Education and degrees in philology. Furthermore, I discovered a wealth of statistical data and information in regarding Higher Education in Poland in a document entitled 'Higher Education Institutions and Their Finances' prepared in 2008 by the Główny Urząd Statystyczny (Central Statistical Office) which had been commissioned by the Polish Government. These materials are not, strictly speaking, analysed here, although my knowledge of them informed my analysis of the interviews.

### **3.3. Interviews in qualitative research**

It is often argued that the only viable method of gaining an insight into phenomena like a person's experiences and attitudes is by looking at the language used to describe or relate them (Billig 2001). Billig rejects the idea that psychological phenomena are 'inner states within the individual' (2001, p.210) and therefore unobservable, and argues that investigation into the language used to describe those phenomena will make them much more accessible. Therefore, asking questions in an interview is an obvious method of accessing this information. There are, nonetheless, several technical and epistemological considerations which suggest caution with regard to the use of interviews as sources of research data. Each interview is defined by the researcher's choice of recording equipment, location and timing of the interviews, and shaped by their decisions about who to interview and how. The circumstances and the perceived

purpose of the interview can have an impact on the interviewees'

attitudes: whether they will feel comfortable or constrained, embarrassed and cautious about what they say, and whether they will be influenced by their idea of the responsibility of creating records, participating in the production of a document. Even in structured interviews, as in naturally occurring interaction, some aspects of the conversation will appear more interesting and more relevant to the interviewer, which might inform follow-up or additional questions asked. This may not be a question of good or bad information, if indeed this distinction can be made in qualitative inquiry.

### **3.3.1. Dialogism and speech genres in interviewing**

Out of practical necessity, the interviews I conducted in this study were scheduled in the same classrooms and at the same time as the students' regular classes. It is possible that the context of the interview was strongly reminiscent of the usual teaching situation and that the students understood my questions as another 'quiz' at the university where the 'correct' answers are called for. The preoccupation with 'correct answers' could be linked to Bakhtin's philosophy ([1953]/1986), and specifically to his concepts of heteroglossia, dialogism, and speech genres. The key philosophical viewpoint which underlines all Bakhtinian theories is his rejection of the idea that language is individual-specific. Instead, language is communal and social and is used to perform social roles. Heteroglossia implies that a speech act is a collective product, a composition made up from an infinite number of voices. It seems it is predominantly the choice of which 'voices' to include in our talk that



'personalises' it. Bakhtin builds his theory of dialogism and heteroglossia by working on the concept of speech genres. Bakhtin argues that the entire act of speech depends on the speaker's choice of a particular speech genre, and says that 'This choice is determined by the specific nature of the given sphere of speech communication, semantic (thematic) considerations, the concrete situation of the speech communication, the personal composition of its participants, and so on ([1953]/1986, p.78). The choice of speech genre is dictated by the context in which we speak. Context is always social, because we learn to recognise it through our interaction within society and within particular speech communities. Billig (2001) develops Bakhtin's theories further by expanding the dependence of speech acts on social contexts by adding the cultural, historical and ideological elements to it by saying that 'Individuals, when they speak, do not create their own language, but they use terms which are culturally, historically and ideologically available. Each act of utterance, although in itself novel, carries an ideological history' (Billig 2001, p.217). This could be argued to have implications for the interpretation of the data collected for this research – data which may or may not have come out from a space where the student identified the need to display their official student identities and official student opinions.

### **3.3.2. Group interviews**

Group Interviews involve two types of interaction – between the interviewer and the interviewees, and amongst the interviewees, and so what is said may be heavily influenced by the presence of other informants and their answers. This can result in information

being withheld, distorted or altered for the sake of the interaction, peer-pressure, self-image or group work. Group responses might be more uniform, more standardised, or simply shed light on how a certain problem is accounted for by a group as opposed to by an individual. Nevertheless, it could be argued that none of these scenarios is a substantial threat to the validity of the interview. The actual utterances which are recorded are the information which the interviewees wanted to disclose and share seem to be a valid source for inference. My decision to choose group interviews was dictated by two reasons. Firstly, I thought that since the students participate in the literature course as a group, I would obtain more interesting data if I interviewed them as a group, by allowing them to interact and react to what the others say. Secondly, this idea appealed to me in view of my lack of experience as a researcher/interviewer and my considerable experience in the classroom working with students. I felt very insecure about the formality of one-to-one interviews, whilst I knew I could 'handle' a group and that I would be much more natural and relaxed interviewing a few people at the same time.

### **3.3.3. Interviews and inference**

As for the validity of interviews as sources of transferable information, the spectrum of approaches is widely polarised. Silverman (1993), for example, argues that interview data should not be approached as a record of true or distorted information. Denzin has aligned himself with several theories throughout his career, but at some point claimed that generalizing in interpretative studies was a justifiable process which 'contributes to theoretical understanding' (quoted by Schwandt 2007, p. 128). In contrast, Holstein and

accomplishment' and therefore the 'interview is an interpersonal drama with a developing plot' (1995, p.16) which facilitates this. This would suggest that an interview may be a form of representation of a general reality as long as we agree that reality is not a state but a process which is only current at the time that it is happening. What is crucial is that the interviewer is an actor in this interpretative process just as much as his/her informants are. For Potter and Wetherell (1988), any reality is not a form of secret and objective being that can be revealed through questioning, and an informant is not an agent of access to the desired information. Potter and Wetherell argue that our experience of the world is a linguistic construction, and our sense of reality, too. As a result, they believe, reality may be defined as a linguistic construction. By the same token, the role of interviewees in a research process is no longer to provide information about reality – the interviewing process becomes constitutive of reality. Therefore, Potter and Wetherell reject the idea that interviews, or other accounts from other contexts, have any external validity outside of the context in which they happen. Rather than uncover reality, an interview, whether done for the purpose of research or, say, for a court hearing, will construct it for the subjective purposes of the interviewer and interviewees. Paradoxically, rather than a weakness, this may seem to be the strength and the very point of interviewing. If people make sense of the world through *constructed* meanings and accounts only, this will be true for both interviews and any natural interaction (Benwell 2005). As our exposure to phenomena extends, we develop a better understanding of them. Interviews seem to have the capacity

to tell us how interviewees talk about their experiences and how they make sense of their reality, and they can be analysed in terms of the new and more in-depth 'perspectives they imply' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 97).

#### **3.3.4. Reflexivity**

The persona of the researcher as a contributor to the interview situation appears to be enormously significant in qualitative studies. Yet again, it seems that there are no reliable recipes for appropriate or successful tactics as each situation will have its own specifications, and it is possible that each strategy will result in different data, depending on, for instance, whether the interview is seen by the participants as a friendly, neutral or formal occasion. Consequently, if the interviewer is deemed to share an identity with the interviewees, this may increase trust and facilitate the conversation. Or, it may result in the conversation being more difficult as the interviewer may not have the insider knowledge expected of them, which will handicap the interview. Also, if the interviewer is perceived to represent a reputable or desirable identity (in terms of education or class, for example), then the interviewees may be primarily concerned with protecting their selves and building protective façades<sup>3</sup>. In this study, numerous identities have been shared between the researcher and the interviewees: my nationality, some of my educational background, and fluency in English as a foreign language. As a result, as Ellis and Berger put it 'their stories and my story might be our stories' (2003). However, there were also

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<sup>3</sup> for a discussion of the multiplicities of 'self' and interpretation of the perspectives of who we take ourselves to be see Davies and Harré (2001)

substantial differences: I am older, I have already finished the degree

they have just started, I have worked in various environments and countries, I live in England and I am a research student at a British University. These similarities and differences could have had an impact on the interviews, but this could be argued to be a natural consequence of using the format of qualitative research and its subjective nature.

### 3.4. Ethical issues

My research has been designed in compliance with the OU ethical procedures, and registered under the Data Protection Act. I sent a letter describing the project by e-mail to the tutors I had contacted and asked them to distribute it among the students as a form of introduction and invitation to participate in my research. The letter included an 'informed-consent form' in which I declare that the interviewees' identity would be anonymised throughout the entire process. I asked the students to sign and return these forms before the recordings started. The signed consent forms have been scanned and saved in my folder on the Open University server.<sup>4</sup> The hard copies have since been disposed of using Open University facilities. The recordings and transcripts have also been uploaded and saved on the Open University server. Although I have been aware throughout that the students may not want to say things that would make them vulnerable, I did not foresee any circumstances in which my research may have a negative impact on the participants. As it turns out, I have become very sensitive to the issue of whether

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<sup>4</sup> I decided that the Open University server offered more security than my private computers.

anonymisation really makes my interviewees anonymous, and concluded that it does not. This prompted me to consider some questions with regard to anonymous researching, for example whether such strict measures really are called for, especially in view of the fact that the students spoke freely about their concerns and did not hesitate to use their names or personal details. On the other hand, I am conscious that the interviewees were told that their identity will be protected in the process and may have found it sufficiently reassuring. However, anonymisation in itself might not be sufficient to make the students or the lecturers anonymous in their local context, since the interviews revealed details from which they could be identified. For this reason, I have included edited transcript of both interviews.

An additional issue is that (on the request of the interviewees) I recorded one of the interviews in Polish and then translated it into English, which naturally renders the language used more regulated and controlled and makes the utterances of the students who spoke to me in English suffer in comparison.<sup>5</sup>

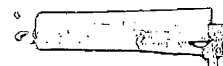
## **CHAPTER FOUR – COLLECTING THE DATA**

### **4.1. Research design**

The idea for my research project and the choice of data collection methods had to be followed by a number of decisions about when, where, who and how to interview. The first answer was dictated by practical constraints. My field work had to be accommodated between the taught part of the Master of Research

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<sup>5</sup> It seems an important consideration to me since all the students requested to see my dissertation once it has been completed



course and mid-May when Polish university students 'collecting signatures' in their 'indeksy',<sup>6</sup> which then allow them to take exams in June. Very few Polish students live on campus – at the end of each academic year they usually disperse throughout the world doing summer jobs or go back to their parental homes to spend holidays there, and I knew that hoping to find interviewees then was a very risky strategy. The decision about which university to approach for permission to conduct my study was much less straightforward. My objective was to concentrate on those universities which traditionally have offered degrees in English Philology, and I finally opted for two departments in two very different universities in terms of their history, tradition and geographical location. Both are in cities which are considered very desirable places to live in by Poles and foreigners alike, (which as my interviews later documented has a considerable influence on the students choice of university), and have had substantial foreign influences throughout their history. One of these departments has taught English Philology for centuries, the other one – since 1945. The history of British literature is usually taught within the first three semesters of the degree. My aim was to interview students who were in the process of studying for the course and as a result the students that were interviewed were mostly first or second year students, and therefore not yet fully initiated into university life and Higher Education.

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<sup>6</sup> 'Indeks' is a student book which is used throughout the course of their university studies. At the end of each semester they ask tutors and lecturers to sign them on the basis of their grades and attendance. Obtaining signatures will allow them to take exams and progress to the next semester or academic year.

The next stage was to approach the two selected departments in order to find out whether the authorities would be willing for their students to participate in my research. Subsequently, after searching through departmental staff lists online I found e-mail addresses of two lecturers of British literature at the two selected universities and contacted them. I briefly introduced myself and the Centre of Research in Education and Educational Technology at the Open University and then described my project. I also explained that the Open University has strict regulations concerning safe and confidential research and committed myself to adhere to those throughout – I enclosed my informed consent letter to prospective interviewees to illustrate that point. I got prompt and friendly responses in which tone I detected that the lecturers (for the purpose of this dissertation from now on I will call them Sonya and Tasha) were intrigued by the fact that such research is being conducted and that they were quite pleased to be invited to participate in it. I explained that, since I live and study in England, it would be very convenient for me if they helped me with scheduling my interviews. Sonya and Tasha promptly organised a couple of dates and e-mailed me to check if they were convenient. I soon realised that both appointments were being made in replacement of regular literature classes (both teachers were going to conferences), which had two important implications for me. Firstly, I interpreted that to be a signal to the students that even though I, as a researcher, was inviting volunteers, the departments expected the students to participate. This impression was strengthened by e-mails which followed where



both Sonya and Tasha were informing me that both groups of students would be fully present for the interviews. In my replies I expressed my gratitude to both the lecturers and the students for their willingness to help, but explained that because of the nature of my research I had to limit the number of participants to five per group. Having made that point, however, I voluntarily ran the risk of having no students to interview at all, but eventually I found students in each room waiting to be interviewed! I did not have any influence on who was selected for the interviews, but I was led to believe that neither Sonya nor Tasha *chose* my interviewees, and that it was the students themselves who took the decision<sup>7</sup>.

#### 4.2. The interviewing process

I distributed consent letters and asked the students to sign them if they were willing to participate. I observed that the letters and the signatures were a source of considerable nervousness, as if the students were expecting something about my research to be secret and hiding behind the invisible small print on the pieces of paper which they were signing. I asked both groups of students whether they wanted to be interviewed in Polish or English. The first group decided that they preferred an interview in Polish and the other chose English with the reservation that they could 'switch' at any time. I recorded and transcribed both interviews (which were about one hour long each) and then translated the interview in Polish into English. The questions were asked to the interviewees as a group.

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<sup>7</sup> Clearly, the students who were present for the interviews had some interest in being there, although they were not formally incentivized in any way. I would describe three of the students as the 'good student' type – conscientious and hard-working. I think they understood participation in my research as a task that the university expected them to perform. As for the rest of the interviewees – it would be hard to generalize and ascribe them to any student category

Sometimes the interviewees took it in turns to answer, at other times their replies resembled a brainstorming session, with all or most of the students contributing. At times the interview took the form of a discussion.

#### 4.2.1. Structure of interviews

The interviews were conducted based on the following structure:

##### 1. Lead-in questions

Why do you study English Philology?

Why did you choose this university?

Where did you learn English?

What's your favourite subject or teacher?

Describe your history of English literature course.

Did you enjoy it?

What are you planning to do in your future?

##### 2. Main questions (as in Chapter Five)

2a. questions related to my research question 1

2b. questions related to my research question 2

On both occasions I supplemented the interview questions with additional ones which stemmed from my reaction to student responses, and therefore even though I covered all the interview questions with both groups as planned, the non-structured parts of the interviews had a considerably different content. For instance, one group understood the concept of intertextuality as an important contribution to their knowledge and I encouraged them to explore that. On the other hand, the other group put a lot of emphasis on the

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relation between their current studies and their future jobs as English

teachers, which resulted in a number of interesting points raised.

## CHAPTER FIVE – DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This dissertation's framework for data analysis is ethnographic, as defined by Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007, p.3) statement that 'the analysis of the data involves interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions and mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations.' Krueger (1994) unpacks this definition further by saying that ethnographic 'analysis is the process of bringing order to the data, organizing what is there into patterns, categories, and basic descriptive units. The analysis process involves consideration of words, tone, context, non-verbals, internal consistency, frequency, extensiveness, intensity, specificity of responses and big ideas.' All these categories of data have been considered in this chapter in the analytical and interpretative processes summarized below with the view of extracting the key concepts in the students' responses, as identified by the researcher.

### 5.1. Research question 1 and related interview questions

1. *How do Polish students of English Philology justify to themselves the fact that they study the History of English Literature as a compulsory subject at undergraduate level?*

In order to investigate this research question, I asked the students:

1. Why do you think the literature course is part of your degree?
2. Is it important?
3. Is it important to study literature generally?

**5.2. Selection of quotations from the transcript**

All the students spoke with conviction about the reasons why they should study English literature as a compulsory subject, and sounded motivated and keen. During the analysis I collated the students' answers, grouped and labelled them as related to the following emergent themes: English language acquisition, personal development or experience, English-Philology specific, and studying literary theory. The latter might perhaps be regarded as an obvious reason for doing the literature course. However, points relating to it seemed to appear last, and as the result of further elicitation on my part.

**English language acquisition:**

Wanda: we get the key to understand the language

Martyna: we expand our vocabulary

Matylda: when you read let's say in the authentic language so you gained some knowledge in the authentic language so it's not just sitting and revising things, it's a kind of pleasure in a way

**Personal development or experience:**

Martyna: mostly this is intellectual development because it's not only about putting oneself in the position to earn money later, but also to generally develop your knowledge

Adela: it's good for your soul

Martyna: I don't know if I'll ever make any use of John Donne's metaphysical poetry but it certainly develops our mind

Matylda: it's a kind of joyful

Aniela: maybe my son will ask me one day and I'll be able to help him with interpretation

**English-Philology specific:**

Helena: without literature it would be just like average language course

Adela: I think that the background, the cultural background. It's not enough to learn the language. I think it's important, it's really vital. Even when you translate legal things

Teresa: especially when you translate it's important that you have the background.

Adela: yes, but in teaching it's also important

Celina: I cannot imagine learning, studying English here, learning grammar, vocabulary, and phonetics without having knowledge about the literature, about the British literature. Everything which is connected with language I think should be taught here.

Celina: and apart from that if you're working with the English language, you're also dealing with the English culture so we rather need to know the history of literature and the topics from it

Martyna: I'm planning to use English in other areas, I'm mostly interested in journalism, and I think I'm here so I can perfect my English and then play a different game

### Studying literary theory:

Helena: the general picture of literature would be somehow impoverished if we didn't do things like 'The Wanderer'

Wanda: we need to cover the canon to know what we're talking about regarding literature

Helena: the most important thing is the background I mean the lectures. And if they are interesting you have a knack of literature, you know in what age you are [meaning: what period in the history of literature] and the general background

## 5.3. Analysis of answers related to research question 1

### 5.3.1. 'It's not just a language course'

Although the categories of language acquisition and personal development or experience are arguably self-explanatory, the categories of English-Philology specific and studying literary theory need further development. Several students frequently emphasised

that their degree is not just an ordinary language course, and that this distinction between a language course (several of the students already have IELTS or Cambridge language exams certificates) and a university degree is crucial to them. This distinction is achieved by the fact that the students are exposed to a variety of subjects, literature being one of them, which will make them English Philology graduates rather than just people who are fluent in English. The students also remarked on the fact that, should they choose to take other career paths (for example journalism), having done a degree in English Philology will make them more knowledgeable, more competent than ordinary speakers of English as a foreign language.

#### 5.3.2. 'We need the general picture'

As noted above, students less readily gave studying literary theory as a reason for doing a literature course. Moreover, the very frequent use of the word 'background' or expressions like 'general picture' seem to suggest that the course is seen as supplementary or feeding into something larger, which is not reading or experiencing literature. It seemed quite striking that the reasons for studying the course to which the students seemed to give priority were related to the role of literature in their acquisition of the English language training and their personal development or experience. It was particularly the acquisition of new vocabulary that the students seemed to target as a learning outcome of studying English literature. Interestingly, in both the Polish and the English interviews, the phrases that were used in order to explain what they did on the course tended to avoid words like 'read' or 'discuss'. Instead, the phrases used were 'exposure to literature', 'have a knack of [sic]

literature', 'cover canon', 'do Renaissance literature', 'deal with

culture', which may be a reflection of the students' perception and attitude to the course.

The students' interpretation of personal development was mostly concerned with the acquisition of factual knowledge, with little regard for other experiences involved. When asked what they could say, if asked, about Alexander Pope (whose poetry they 'covered' in the course), for example only one student answered:

Aniela: He was very short, wasn't he? 5'3" or something

I would argue this to be highly symptomatic of their idea of what can be described as knowledge – they memorised a fact about a poet: he was very short in stature.

#### 5.3.3. 'You need to know something about everything'

Frequent references to the role of literature in one's general education and intellectual development prompted me to ask the students for a definition of 'an intellectual'. One of the students provided me with one which all the others present approved of:

Klara: someone developed in different directions that can hold a conversation with anyone on any topic. Of course, you also say 'good at everything, good at nothing' but someone who has their own particular interests which they develop more, but you cannot neglect other stuff; you need to know something about everything.

There are some interesting points in this definition. Firstly, it is not clear whether it is indeed conceivable that anyone should be able to 'know something about everything', or whether there are implicit restrictions to this definition, for example limiting the area to everything *in the Humanities*. If that is the case, then it would be



worth researching why the Humanities are regarded as disciplines

where such an achievement is possible, and how.

#### **5.3.4. 'This is just for me'**

It seemed clear from the discussion that the emotional and evocative experience of reading was in fact important to the students, but only on a personal level:

Klara: I wouldn't say that I feel frustrated that I cannot talk with my friends about this literature. This is just for me

Celina: When I'm angry I don't see any point in learning and reading those books. However they are very interesting, but I know that I won't use in my future life, my future job. Of course I could talk with girls about or with my teachers. However in my private life probably I won't use it, I won't talk about British literature and in my job probably not.

#### **5.3.5 'No time for philosophizing'**

The impression that they lacked confidence in discussing those topics was quite strong, to the point of suggesting that the students found sharing such experiences embarrassing, not just with the researcher, but also among themselves.

Wanda: Still, for me literature is conducive to thinking about author's motives to write something

Martyna: I mean that's maybe something that I already observed in high school, when I was not at university... but now I think I don't have too much time for philosophizing (sarcastically), but I'm more after the language.

#### **5.3.6. 'It makes you a better person'**

Wanda and Adela were the only two students who thought that the emotions and reflections which were provoked by the

Nevertheless, when Adela was talking about her experience of reading and its impact on her mood and attitudes, she still supported it by external evidence saying for instance '*I read somewhere that books increase your ability for empathy*'.

Wanda and Adela were the two oldest interviewees, and already had other degrees. From that, it is possible to infer that their attitude was a reflection of their greater maturity, their longer experience as students, or perhaps the different perspective resulting from already having obtained a degree and being more realistic about the actual application of their university knowledge to a professional context.

Adela: When I did the other degree, it was called the fifth year syndrome. You are so frustrated and you're so afraid that you learnt all those things and now you actually know nothing to guide you through your life. But really, I think it's ... it really makes you a better person or more intelligent person

To which Celina added '*a wise person*' and then the whole group laughed.

#### 5.3.7. 'Useful Things'

One of the most thought-provoking pieces of data which I obtained was the following exchange:

Beata: [...] do you think that there should be a separate degree in literature?

Chorus: No!

Adela: No, because nobody would go there! People I think want to have a job and want to learn useful things

Arguably this is the most disheartening conclusion that any educator in the Humanities could hear. What is more, I asked that question in response to the students' fluent rhetoric on the essentiality of their

literature course to their degree, hoping to find out about the overall

importance of literary education. Literature seems to provide a background to one's education. If that element were missing the status of one's knowledge and education would be threatened. Also one's status as an intellectual, which is one of the primary goals of participating in Higher Education, would not be accomplished. I now wish I had asked the students if they were aware that literature degrees were offered in other countries, and also asked what 'useful things' were in Humanities.<sup>8</sup> I also wish I had enquired whether the students thought that literature was 'not useful' or 'useless', which I think is an important distinction and would have elicited interesting answers, where the former still offers some hope for the existence of Literature at universities – not useful, but perhaps worthwhile.

#### 5.4. Research question 2 and related interview questions

##### 2. *What do students report as the outcomes of their study of the*

*History of English Literature, and do they rate it as a positive or negative experience?*

In order to investigate this research question, I asked the students

1. What did you get out of this course?
2. What kind of knowledge did you acquire?
3. Are you going to be able to use this knowledge in your future life – private and professional?
4. Did the course change you as a person?
5. Did you have any difficulty studying for the course?

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<sup>8</sup> I suggest that the later is another valid question for further research



While the students seemed to talk at ease and at length about their understanding and appreciation of the reasons behind studying English literature, their responses to questions 1-5 required much more elicitation and prompting. It was also difficult to encourage the students to limit their assessment to the literature course only, and not to refer to the whole course or degree.

#### 5.5.1. 'When we read we learn words'

One outcome that all the students seemed to agree on, and praise, was the improvement in their fluency in English. However, one student contradicted this by saying:

Matylda: I'm too lazy to check the words I'm reading so I'm only guessing what they mean by context but I don't think so that I gained or acquired too many words while reading

From the body language and a spell of silence that followed, it seemed like this confession resonated with a majority of the other interviewees. However, some of them tried to defend their effort by saying

Teresa: when we read a word repeated many times we learn it

The impact of reading on the acquisition of one's vocabulary is widely appreciated in ELT. However, the idea that one's communication skills improve through reading could be contested, as well as the student definition of the phrase 'to learn a word'. Also, bearing in mind the composition of the reading list, it is worth asking to what extent the vocabulary the students learn from it is in contemporary usage, and to what extent it can be employed communicatively.

As for their ability to engage with literature as university students, only one student identified two outcomes: her awareness of the importance of intertextuality and her ability to find what she called 'imageries':

Aniela: in order to spot intertextuality you really need to be familiar with the canon. It's necessary to understand what's been written earlier, because everything written now is based on what was before

Aniela: for example when we're discussing various works, we look for so called imageries and it's made simpler by the introduction to the literary studies because it's already been covered

The comment about intertextuality suggests here that the literary canon should be familiarised with in order to 'spot' intertextuality, rather than that awareness of intertextuality should serve as a tool in appreciating the literary canon or literature in general. A tempting follow-up question would be whether this is really the student's opinion, or their tutors'? This perception implies the student's acquisition of some kind of expert knowledge about literature which lay readers will not have, which is important to Aniela as an English Philology student.

**5.5.3. 'Interpretations from footnotes'**

I asked about the students' interpretative skills, looking for evidence of their improvement (as per the course guidelines), but the answers I got did not seem promising:

Wanda: Well, I'm very talented in not getting the right interpretations, and unfortunately I didn't notice the elements of mythical love in John Donne, which we didn't discuss in our classes. And the exam was marked by another tutor. Touché.

Martyna: well, when it comes to poetry [our interpretation is] most commonly an interpretation from footnotes

Wanda's difficulty in not 'getting the right interpretations' perhaps shapes her overall attitude to poetry:

Wanda: No, I can't stand [it], I dislike [it], all the time I have problems understanding poetry. It's horrible.

Admittedly, she might have already had this attitude before she became an English Philology student as she must have encountered poetry throughout her schooling. Nevertheless, the course in English literature does not seem to have improved matters, especially given that she failed the exam.

#### 5.5.4. 'It does not encourage'

Several interviewees commented on the fact that literature affected their moods. However, when asked for an explanation, it turned out that it was in fact their attitude to literature that they were talking about:

Adela: when you've passed your exam you've got a positive attitude [to literature]. A night before or two nights before you hate it.

The students in the other group also talked about the difficulty that the reading list created for them:

Klara: I think that we all try and cope in all manners possible.

Aniela: Yes, It would have been impossible,

Martyna: After basically a week here, to read Beowulf in original. It seems too much of ...

Teresa: It was a difficult start

Martyna: ...a challenge to us, first year students in the first meeting.

Wanda: You needed to check every word

Martyna: It was emotionally draining

Klara: It does not encourage – every week seven hundred pages, it's impossible

#### 5.5.5. 'Encouragement to read in the summer'

One of the tutors I exchanged e-mails with sent me the reading lists that she prepared for her courses, which includes 35 names of authors including Beckett, Joyce and Conrad. When asked about her objectives, she responded that she tries to give the students as much knowledge as possible with an emphasis on reading the whole books, and since she only has 60 teaching hours for that, there is no time for 'experiments'.<sup>9</sup> I subsequently asked what she meant by 'experiments' and was told that experimenting would mean diverting from the well-established canon and well-established ways of dealing with it.

I asked the students for their assessment of such a survey approach to studying literature, and the opinions seemed divided.

Beata: So what kind of knowledge is it?

Maria: A kind of ...

Teresa: An encouragement to read it in the summer

Helena: Yes I've got a list of books to finish,

Similarly:

Celina: [in other countries] it's more deeper discussion that we have here.

So you will have deeper, more profound knowledge about the book.

Adela: At the other hand I think that they don't have such comprehensive lectures, they have they focus on for example one or two authors or one period, but they are not I think they are not required to know everything from every epoch

Beata: And which knowledge is better, whose knowledge is better?

(long pause)

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<sup>9</sup> My translated summary of her exact words

Celina: It's hard to say

Matylda: I think we should do one thing good and not many just on the surface you know

Celina: Yeah but it's also good to have knowledge about others

Maria: But on the other hand it's a good thing to do everything, just by pieces let's say 'cos if somebody is interested in A and somebody is interested in B, those people could do what they like and not not there are not imposed to do everything

#### 5.5.6. 'There were no feelings there'

I would argue that the keywords to the understanding of the students' attitudes are 'to know' and 'knowledge' – these reflect their search for and valuation of the assessable and verifiable information that is transmitted to them during the course. Consequently, it is perhaps unsurprising that one of the students stated the following:

Matylda: Yeah but while we're reading Puritan literature how would we change our feelings, when there are no feelings there?

Admittedly the course aims and objectives as cited on page 6 of this dissertation do not consider the students' experience of reading or any emotional reaction to literature. Nonetheless, they do emphasise the students' analytical and interpretative skills, which are arguably hard to achieve without any reference to emotions and feelings in literature. Some of the students also seem to detect this deficiency:

Helena: It's not only about reading, but also about discussing that book here in our classes. It's not possible to discuss people from *Vanity Fair* in half an hour, or *Middlemarch*

This had a very pronounced effect on their perception of the course and their attitude to studying and reading:

Adela: Usually there are people who don't read anything here and they read only summaries and such things. In fact it's sometimes it depends on



the teacher. There are some teachers that the classes are like this that when you *read* the book you know you are less prepared then if you didn't read it and [when] you read notes only so I hate such classes but usually you don't finish a book and you look for the information somewhere else because there isn't time

#### 5.5.7. 'Being English' switches off

I was very interested to find out whether the students would identify any of the outcomes of their study as a change to their mentality or personality: as seen above, they seemed to identify personal development as a reason for studying literature. The students, however, did not seem to believe that there was any evidence of this as an outcome in their own case (perhaps because, as seen above, they understood the relevant kind of personal development as being about acquiring information that they would be able to refer to). This can be seen in the following responses:

Teresa: Studying British literature didn't change me and didn't have any influence on me. However, I really appreciate that we do read it because through reading we deepen our knowledge about the language and English culture.

Klara: I mean we live in Poland and we're a minority who knows English literature and it doesn't have an impact on our lives

Martyna: I mean I think I've become more confident communicating in English. I guess that's the only thing

Aniela: Maybe in the sense that greater knowledge results later in us being able to detect more intertextuality in texts that we read later. But as people or in any other way no. I go back home and we speak Polish with my mum so everything is ok. My flat mates speak Polish. I think that this '*being English*' switches off at some point and you're yourself again.

Adela: You're wiser in terms of feelings and understanding feelings I think maybe that is the one thing

Wanda: Yes, because [...] for every author, the point of departure was a different set of values and features, and at least for me this is very interesting. [...] for someone at some point that book was a very serious matter, and it was contemporary and relevant and that is terribly interesting.

Klara [in response to Wanda]: Yeah if you're interested in that sort of thing, but I don't think it has an impact on us

I would argue that the fact that the students do not judge being a minority, having a deeper knowledge, having an insight into what was relevant and contemporary to other generations, or being able to approach a literary text differently, as influential is very important and raises many interesting questions. What kind of academic experience would the students need to undergo to decide that it had an impact on them? What would they identify as an important influence on their personality? What profound transformations would have the effect of 'change' and 'influence' on the students? In analogy to the first research question, only Adela and Wanda, the more mature and experienced students, seem to differ in their opinions from the general consensus, and link 'wisdom', 'understanding' and new perspectives as factors which build and change their personalities.

## CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSIONS

### 6.1. A reflection on the research process

Naturally, I have not been able to include all the factors which have an impact on the contexts I was researching. I tried to take account of the political, social and historical background to the positioning of Higher Education, English and English literature in Poland; however I cannot claim to have researched that area comprehensively as it would have been impossible in the time given.<sup>10</sup> Nor did I attempt to obtain much information about the social background of the students I interviewed.<sup>11</sup> I was able to infer some information about their financial or personal circumstances, but I decided that, apart from their age and educational history, I did not have any particular reason to believe that those factors would affect the responses to my questions.

Another important restriction which needs to be referred to is the fact that I did not observe any tutorials during my data collection process. Although observations would have been an obvious opportunity for me to collect more data, I decided to avoid *my* assessment of the teaching methodology and the classroom dynamics present during tutorials and thus run the risk of filtering my judgment on those into my data analysis – it was the students' opinions that I was after. Had I requested access to my interviewees beyond the interviews, and had I made such provisions in my ethical

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<sup>10</sup> And I doubt if it is indeed possible to do that conclusively, especially from a contemporary perspective

<sup>11</sup> In Poland, it is rarely possible to guess where one comes from in terms of their place of birth or social class if they are educated beyond the Polish equivalent of English A-levels

approval application, I would have gone back to ask additional 'why' questions to some of the particularly interesting threads in their discussion. Also, had I understood my research area the way I understand it now, I would have altered the structure of my interviews by asking fewer lead-in and background-orientated questions. And finally, I would have scheduled more and longer interviews, also with individual students. I had little faith in the students being interested in my research and responding to it, which turned out to be wrong, and consequently very revealing. The willingness and openness with which my interviewees responded was another form of data for me, which proved how deeply involved and committed they are to their studies, although they do not express it in such terms.

## 6.2. Summary of findings

It seems that for the purpose of the history of English literature course, English Philology students in Poland expect to memorise and process facts *about* literature, rather than learn skills which will allow them to participate better in the lifelong experience with literature. This appears to be in conflict with the aims of literature courses in English Philology which are supposed to train students in the skills of text analysis and interpretation.

The students report a considerable focus on the linguistic aspect of reading for the course. This impression was fortified by the students' frequent references to the vocabulary range and number of words they acquire in the course, as well as their unanimous respect for what they generally define as descriptive linguistics, which is a 'proper' subject, i.e. one that has rules (understanding of which is fairly easily assessable). The students are very conscious of the fact

that their course of study should prepare them for the future, not just for the exams, and they do not see how this transfer could be achieved. Therefore, they see the new vocabulary they learn while studying literature as a form of 'proper' knowledge which they will be able to use beyond the exam date.

The data gathered clearly indicate that these students have a positive attitude to the history of English literature course, and can provide and discuss several reasons why they think it is important. However, they do not see why literature itself could be treated as a discipline in its own right, unless one wants to be a lecturer.

Although, it was not originally the main aspect of my research I could not fail to notice that none of the students I interviewed seemed to display any symptoms of Anglophilia. As an English Philology graduate and a linguist I would personally define it as a passion and interest in the English language, but more importantly – a drive to know about all things 'Anglo'. None of the students demonstrated any signs of subscription to these categories.<sup>12</sup> In fact, after some prompting, some students replied with frustration to my questions about the importance of reading English literature:

Klara: Poland puts more emphasis on canons, especially foreign literature, than anywhere else

Aniela: We [as a country] have got this fascination with other cultures and other histories at the expense of ours

These opinions seem quite striking in the fact that they come from people who *chose* to study a foreign language and a foreign culture.

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<sup>12</sup> On the linguistic level: as an English Philology student in the 1990s, I had been used to what is described in Poland as 'Green Point' talk and so expected to hear a form of Polish characterised by English intrusions, calques, false friends, etc. I was very surprised to find that I had only recorded two instances of code switching during the interview in Polish.

Also notably, these students do not seem to object to the 'linguistic imperialism' of English (Phillipson 1992), but to 'foreignness' and 'otherness' in general. Although we do not have sufficient data to analyse this here, I would argue that it would be interesting to find out whether Polish students who choose 'English' for a degree perceive that word as referring to a *language* (an entity innately linked with particular nations, cultures, identities, geographies), or whether it has become a *qualification*, like a computer course.

Martyna: Language is only a tool which we use at university. It could be German or Italian instead, or French. If you study maths then you're in the maths world at university

The perception of English as only a qualification could seemingly create difficulties for the legitimacy of Quirkian concepts of idiomatic or standard language (Quirk 1990), but it does not. The idea(l) of the 'native-speaker' still seems to retain its position strongly as almost all students of English in Poland,<sup>13</sup> certainly at the tertiary level of their education still cite becoming 'native speaker-like' as the ambition of their language education. In contrast, reading literature, a redundant cultural element without iconic concepts like native-author, which cannot defend its position on the basis of employability or usefulness, seems to be losing its legitimacy as a subject.

On a practical level, the interviewees confessed that the course was a considerable source of difficulty, stress and frustration to them. The stress and difficulty were caused by the excessive number of books they were expected to read, and the level of linguistic difficulty they were faced with while attempting to read them.

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<sup>13</sup> And possibly on many other countries, for example in China (Cai 2007)

The frustration was caused by the fact that despite their effort, they did not achieve the basic requirement of reading the books they were supposed to read:

Matylda: Yeah [we got] a kind of knowledge of course, but not the the the best one 'cos a we had we have no time to read the books

In this sense, the students were aware of a sort of failure, even though they all passed the exam at the end of the course. On the other hand, on the whole the interviewees did not seem to believe that the course or the syllabi should be revised. Their willingness to put up with this failure and the difficulty (or rather impossibility) of following the course in its entirety seems to be motivated by their self-image as intellectuals. The notion that one needs to know something about everything regardless of the application of this knowledge is compatible with the interviewees' definition of intellectuality, which they all identified as one of the primary aims of their education.

The students talk about their anxieties and insecurities as to whether the effort they put in studying for the course will ever be rewarded in practical terms: a prestigious job and a competitive salary.

Matylda: As let's say as my teacher from let's say from my teaching practice said that her student says something like you're underpaid so you will not teach me anything so for me it's a bit sad

And it was on those grounds that Martyna expressed a need for the course programme to be revised:

Martyna: I mean I think nobody's teaching us [...] what's important on today's [job] market, because sometimes our lack of knowledge can be re-touched by other skills, communication skills, by knowing how to talk about things we don't know, about career ladder climbing skills

Nevertheless, it could be argued that the history of English literature course does indeed provide instruction in what Martyna describes as 'communicative skills' – the students have learnt to talk and write about poetry and prose which they did not read.

Finally, following my argument in Chapter 5 about the importance of the emphasis which the students put on the distinction between language courses and an English Philology degree, it seems to me that the students are willing to accept that they must study English literature, because it is the existence of such subjects like literature (even if they are 'not useful') which gives them reasons to claim that this distinction exists. Therefore, studying English literature is essential for their identity as 'superior' learners of English and intellectuals, and going through their canonical literature course, regardless of the compromises they make and the disappointments they experience, is a price they are willing to accept for the sake of the wellbeing of this identity. Consequently, it seems to me that the status of the course on the history of English literature as part of the degree programme will remain unthreatened – unless there comes a time when there are not enough students for all the departments to survive in their current numbers.

#### **6.4. Conclusion**

The picture that emerges from this study is not meant as a conclusive assessment or a harsh critique of English Philology departments in Poland. At the beginning of my Master of Research course, when my understanding of the problem was informed mainly by my own experience and frustration as a student and a teacher, I



would have perhaps been inclined to suffice with such a critique. And even now, I still maintain that the courses I asked my interviewees about failed to deliver, in the sense that all of my interviewees admitted that they did not manage to read the vast majority of books on their reading lists due to time restrictions and the difficulty posed by the material they were expected to cope with. But having carried out this research, I have come to recognise that this is my own assessment, not shared by the students I interviewed.

The students, in spite the negative comments and experiences they shared, approve of the history of English literature course and support its existence. I would argue that this results from the fact that they see their future degree in English Philology as a reason to claim the status of cultured intellectuals, and the literature course is one of the arguments that justify it. This seems to be in line with the understanding of status and the role of education in the Polish society discussed above. Regardless of the historical and political changes in Poland and Polish education which I outlined in the introduction, despite the growing number of people who succeed in learning English and the students' utilitarian perception of the English language, acquiring the knowledge about English literature which enables the students to talk about it is a cause for them to claim professional and perhaps social 'distinction' (Bourdieu 1984).

### **6.3. Suggestions for further research**

The task of selecting relevant literature for the purpose of designing my research and for Chapter 2 of this dissertation has turned out to be the most difficult part of the research process.

Reading every book and article I came across, I found much that was relevant but nothing that covered exactly the ground I was trying to explore. Indeed, there are several angles from which I could have approached the topic: a study into the status and aims of Higher Education, teaching methods in academia, academic literacy, TESOL, the role of literature in English Language Teaching, literature teaching in general, foreign literature teaching, literature reception, foreign literature reception, a sociolinguistic analysis of the discourse employed by the students to express their opinions, a study of the status of English as a foreign language, and perhaps a few more. In fact I could redefine all those points by adding the qualifier 'in Poland' to them, and possibly arrive at brand new areas for research. This complexity and the factors involved which are implicitly in conflict and in competition (for instance the uneasy compromise between 'it's good for my soul' against 'it won't give me a good job') is precisely where the challenge of designing, teaching and studying an English Philology (or philology, in general) course lies.

The better insight that I have gained into how the interplay of all the factors involved affect the process of study, and an insight into the experiences and opinions of students has allowed me to identify more pertinent questions which I believe to deserve further researching. It is with those questions that I would like to conclude this dissertation:

1. Do students consider an attainment of intellectuality to be the aim of studying for a degree in the Humanities more generally? Is English Philology a particularly direct path

leading to this aim, and how does it compare to Polish

Philology in this respect?

2. Under what conditions would it be possible and meaningful for the students to treat the emotional experience of reading as part of their intellectual development, and as such as an important element of university education?

3. What kind of educational outcomes do students of other foreign languages perceive as influential and important for their personalities? Can studying other literatures also have that effect?

4. If students as stakeholders were invited to suggest ways to make the history of English literature courses within English Philology more meaningful in terms of their own reading experiences, what revisions would they suggest?

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## Appendix 1

### Interview 1 (edited<sup>14</sup>)

**Beata: So in Polish or in English?**

?: Polish

Matylda: It won't be much different. What's more convenient for you?

**Beata: It doesn't make any difference to me...**

Adela: English unless we don't manage, let's see

**Beata: Great. Let's start in English and you can switch to Polish whenever you want to**

Adela: Yeah we can always switch (laughs)

**Beata: So which one do we start with?**

(long pause)

**Beata: Right off we go in English then, and then we'll see.**

**Can you tell me a few words about your background? What year you are? You know that sort of thing. Not about your personal background, but about you in the department. Is it you fourth semester or?**

Celina: It's our fourth semester

**Beata: Right**

Celina: We are on the second year of English Philology, university of xxx. We are from xxx groups and xxx groups (xxx refers to specialization, easily identifiable)

**Beata: I see**

Celina: What else...

Matylda: That's all

**Beata: Right OK. Did you have English literature in the first year?**

Celina: Yes

**Beata: OK**

Matylda, Celina: British only

**Beata: OK and that was how long ne semester or two semesters?**

Celina: Two semesters. Lectures and classes

Adela: Classes

Celina: Classes yes

**Beata: So and how long was the lecture?**

Celina: Forty-five minutes once a week and this year is the same

Matylda: And classes we had like one and a half hour a week

**Beata: And that's all compulsory?**

Matylda, Celina: Yes

**Beata: And the exam?**

Matylda: Last year

Celina: We had oral exam. Last year, at the end of the year

Matylda: This year we had written

Celina: Written and oral

Adela: They're usually oral, with literature it's something different

**Beata: OK and how does it work?**

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<sup>14</sup> The fragments removed from both transcripts include interview questions and answers which were used in my analysis. The decision to delete them was dictated by the ethical issues which I mention in Chapter 3



Matylda: We got questions

Celina: We had to choose random questions. I think it was like two, one from classes and one from lectures, because we have lectures and classes with two different teachers.

Adela: I had something a little bit different, but it was like this. We had test at the end of classes, and exam from lectures.

**B: And what questions did you get?**

Matylda: I got something like describe the folk ballads and medieval lyrics and let's say tragic here in Shakespearean tragedies

Celina: I had to say about Elizabethan theatre and I had to talk about allegory yes in Peril and as a second question was Geoffrey Chaucer and Canterbury Tales I had to talk about

Adela: I don't remember my question but I remember that I talked about Don Quixote in relation to the I mean to English literature

**Beata: And what about you?**

Helena: Typical features of Shakespearean comedies in example of Midsummer Nights Dream and the second one was about Morality Plays

**Beata: I admire your memory because I don't think I remembered my questions five minutes after I left the room**

Chorus: (laugh)

Adela: I'm the same

**Beata: How how did you 'cos obviously you start your studies here already knowing a lot of English so how did you learn it?**

Adela: The language?

**Beata: Yes**

Adela: I had it mostly at school I didn't go to any private lessons, but my father is an English teacher so I had contact with the language from the beginning

**Beata: Right. What about the rest of you?**

Celina: I had extra classes, outside school, like twice a week and of course from the first class of primary school I had English like twice a week or three times a week

Maria: The same with me.

Matylda: When I've got to the high school I I let's say realised that every person talks English quite well so I I realised that I should speak English fluently too so my mother sent me to some school and for two years probably yes English classes extra classes let's say in high school

**Beata: Did you take any exams like FCE?**

Maria: No

Matylda: I passed only IELTS. yeah only first cos then I decided not to take anything else and wait if I get to the university

Adela: But I we all I think passed the Matura

Matura, yes (chorus)

**Beata: What about you?**

Helena: Well, I've got CAE and CPE too

**Beata: All your classes are in English, aren't they?**

Helena: Not really

Not all (chorus)

**Beata: OK so what are the exceptions?**

Adela: Translation

Matylda: Yes translation classes and our lectures sociology,

Celina: aesthetics, and history of art

**Beata: I didn't expect these classes to be part of your course programme**

Adela: They are part of the course for xxx. Because we have to I'm a xxx but when you become a xxx you have to have subjects that xxx so you have cultural studies

**Beata: Could you individually tell me what were the reasons behind your choice of university and and this particular department.**

Matylda: University of xxx was the closest to my place of living that's the first thing. And I got let's say no money to move anywhere else. That was the main point. There was particular subject, because I have no money to study artistic school

Maria: The reason was that I always wanted to live in xxx, because I'm not from here, and my place of living is also rather close to xxx, it's a hundred kilometres and to be honest the particular reason to be studying English was that I didn't have anything instead of it. Let's say. It was I like English I think I'm not I'm quite good at it and so let's try. That was the only reason for me.

Celina: I also as Maria said I like xxx however I'm it was quite by accident that I study here because I was supposed to study in Poznan at Economy Academy but in September I changed my mind and I took my papers from Poznan and brought it here.

Adela: I chose xxx because of personal reasons which have now expired but I stayed here nevertheless and I first studied, finished xxx and I thought Oh my God I have nothing no work whatsoever so I chose something that would give me work and English was I'm good at languages and I think it's a good great idea for me, and it turned out that English is great for me, but entrance requirements were fitted my Matura so I got here

Helena: Well I live here in ... and I didn't want to go anywhere else and I like English I like translations and I thought that it would be something for me.

**Beata: Right so now that you've finished four semesters almost is literature your favourite subject?**

Celina: Even though I'm weak from grammar we have a great teacher in

Matylda: Practical grammar

Celina: Practical grammar teacher. Can we give the surname?

**Beata: Yeah yeah**

Celina: Mrs xxx to my way of thinking she is the best

Matylda: Yeah

Celina: Yes

Matylda Yes She's like walking encyclopaedia

Celina: Yes

Maria: We really appreciate the way that she is conducting the lessons and the way that

Celina: And she's really excited with what she's doing

Maria: Yes

Celina: We can see that she enjoys teaching us

?: Uhm

Celina: and she enjoys grammar, vocabulary, and everything that is connected with language

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Matylda: And we can ask her questions and she will always answer us so

**Beata: Right OK**

Adela: My favourite is American literature and interpreting. And I think I like American literature because of the personality of the teacher

**Beata: OK That seems very important to all of you**

Yes (chorus)

Helena: Well I like translations I think, but literature too Yes, just like you I like American literature because the our lecturer she's really nice

Yes (chorus)

**Beata: OK**

Celina: her lesson's conducting

Matylda: Really interesting

Yes

**Beata: So you've already described your grammar, your practical grammar teacher so I get an idea, but what makes a good literature class? Or what doesn't make a good literature class?**

Maria: The teacher I think

?: Yes

Maria: When the teacher explains new things or describes something interestingly

Adela : When you see that the teacher really loves literature, loves teaching literature, loves showing you what is interesting in books

Matylda: Yes!

Adela: You read, and even if she says she doesn't like something and she says that we'll skip, we'll go through it quickly, you you see that she has some attitude towards literature

**Beata: Is that what you think as well?**

Helena: Yes well, the most important thing is the background I mean the lectures. And if they are interesting you have a knack of literature, you know in what age you are and the general background, and when it comes to the classes I think there should be a balance between our work and the teacher's presentations. They don't they can't look like a lecture but we shouldn't do everything on our own

**Approximately 3 minutes have been deleted from the transcript**

Celina: Maybe because I know some people think that for teaching you have to have like less skills or be less capable I don't know

Adela: Yes but it's all wrong

Celina Yeah I know it's a stereotype

Adela: it's a Polish thing

**Beata: That's really interesting, could you please go on (laughs)**

Adela: There is not, I would not like to be a teacher but I think that this is really sad that teachers are not estimated enough. People think that it's so simple to teach and then we have low

Celina: Level?

Adela: No they get little money and are even less liked and then there is such way of choosing people to the profession. And and teaching, teaching teaching is not at a very high level I think

**Beata: So how do future teachers here feel about that?**

Celina: It's sad because one of the teachers repeat all the time that teachers are not paid enough money, they're not estimated enough

Matylda: As let's say as my teacher from let's say from my teaching practice said that her student says something like you're underpaid so you will not teach me anything so for me it's a bit sad as Adela said

Yes (chorus)

Adela: We all know teachers that we loved it was so few of them in school

**Beata: Do you think this is going to change? When you start work or?**

Matylda: No

Celina: No rather no

Adela: People escape from this profession

Celina: That's right, because the their pay , of the money they earn, payment

Maria: Not only the money but also the position. I've got the impression that here in our department the teachers profile is underestimated and linguists are always better from the start.

**About 10 minutes of transcript deleted**

**Beata:** And how many students are there in your department?

Maria: No, it's thirty, thirty, forty

Celina: Yeah and 90 people accepted, yeah every sometimes

Matylda: we had like over one hundred

**Beata: And now?**

Celina: it's 67, but some people didn't like even show up

Adela: Didn't even appear

**Approximately 3 minutes have been deleted from the transcript**

**Beata: But you have to study literature and pass the exam etc.**

**Why do you think this literature course is part of your degree?**

Adela: I think that the background, the cultural background. It's not enough to learn the language. I think it's important, it's really vital. Even when you translate legal things

Helena: Especially when you translate it's important that you have the background.

Adela: Yes, but in teaching it's also important

Matylda: And we all let's say when you read let's say in the authentic language let's say so you gained some knowledge in the authentic language so it's it's not just sitting and revising things, it's a kind of pleasure in a way

**Beata: Can you tell me what was on your reading list? Was it something chronological?**

Matylda: Last year?

**Beata: Yeah we're talking about British literature**

Adela: It is usually chronological, but I think that this year's first year has from the beginning modern literature also. They have chronological history of literature and modern literature also. So I think it's more fun.

Maria: Last year we started with Bef, Bef

Beowulf (chorus)

Maria: And Wanderer

?: Shakespeare

Helena: Canterbury Tales

**Beata: And how did you read all that? Was it difficult to read it?**

Matylda: During the lessons

Maria: We tried to do it

Celina: Yeah it's very hard to read especially Wanderer or the text from the beginning of this century because they are written in Old English and

Matylda: We do not have such language as to check the well it's

Adela: But you have well we read Beowulf in translation and English translation I mean and we were also told that we because we had many Shakespeare's plays on our reading list the teacher told us that we really should read them in Polish to really understand not only because we wouldn't understand the puns and the jokes, to understand the matter and the plot. So we were allowed to read it in Polish, although it's an exception.

**Beata: Do how do you feel about that?**

Adela: I don't like reading English literature in Polish. I know what it's like to be a translator and I know what a translator leaves out so I like to read everything in original

Matylda: It's something like you translate Tolkien and that stuff let's say and the Lord of the Rings probably had two translators and one of them was totally horrible so it was my first well not first second or third time when I when I tried to read Tolkien Lord of the Rings I mean and I let's say by accident I picked up the the translation from the horrible translator and it was something like oh God I didn't know the names here it's something different from what I used to know so as U. said translators could change things

Adela: Always change

Helena: Always change things, it's impossible

Maria: It makes it even harder to understand in Polish translation

Celina: However I don't like Medieval lyrics, poetry the lyrics and poetry coming from the beginning of the century like Beowulf or the Wanderer, this is quite hard to read

**Beata: I'm just wondering I mean you know thinking about how you explain to your own selves you know why you're doing it, you can't really understand it in the original because nobody can properly so it's not contemporary so I imagine it's more difficult to relate to than modern literature, but you still have to do it and how do you motivate yourself? Or maybe you think that there are good reasons?**

Matylda: It's definitely more interesting than learning the history of language on descriptive grammar

Yeah

(laughs)

Helena: Definitely

Matylda: And

Adela: I don't know

Matylda: it's a kind of joyful

Helena: And the general picture of literature would be somehow impoverished if we didn't do even the Wanderer

Yes

**Beata: So you've got a positive attitude to to the course and you think it's important?**

Adela: Maybe when you've passed your exam you've got a positive attitude. A night before or two nights before you hate it.

Celina: And good motivation is also when the teacher ask you during the lesson what's it's about the book and you have to simply know it. Because every week seven hundred pages, it's impossible especially

**Beata: So how do you solve that problem?**

Adela: Usually there are people who don't read anything here and they read only summaries and such things. In fact it's sometimes it depends on the teacher. There are some teachers that the classes are like this that when you read the book you know you are less prepared then if you didn't read it and you read notes only so I hate such classes but usually you don't finish a book and you look for the information somewhere else because there isn't time

**Beata: So do you think, having done the course and passed the exam you actually acquired some knowledge, or what is it that you got out of it?**

Matylda: Yeah a kind of knowledge of course, but not the the the best one 'cos a we had we have no time to read the books

**Beata: So what kind of knowledge is that really?**

Maria: A kind of

Helena: An encouragement to read it in the summer

Adela: Yes I've got a list of books to finish

**Beata: It sounds like you are a little bit frustrated by that 'cos you would like to finish that book, but you have no time to do that**

Helena: It's not only about reading, but also about discussing that book here in our classes. It's not possible to discuss Vanity Fair in half an hour, or Middlemarch

**Beata: So you feel encouraged to do that in your own time**

Celina: They are very interesting, there's no doubt about it. However, during this course, the academic year, it's not enough time to read all books from the list, because this year we have longer books that the previous year.

**Beata: Do you now what this situation looks like in other countries. Whether that's similar to what you do here or?**

?: No

Adela: I know something about, because I listen to a lot of lecturer from for example Yale Open University and there is something different there. You I don't know you discuss a book you have to read, it's impossible not to read it and you discuss it during three or four classes. Usually.

Celina: It's more deeper discussion that we have here. So you will have deeper, more profound knowledge about the book.

Adela: At the other hand I think that they don't have such comprehensive lectures, They have they focus on for example one or two authors or one period, but they are not *I think* they are not required to know everything from every epoch

**Beata: And which knowledge is better, whose knowledge is better?**

(long pause)

Celina: It's hard to say

Matylda: I think we should do one thing good and not many just on the surface you know

Celina: Yeah but it's also good to have knowledge about others

Maria: But on the other hand it's a good thing to do everything, just by pieces let's say 'cos if somebody is interested in A and somebody is interested in B, those people could do what they like and not not there are not imposed to do everything

**Beata: So what can you do with this knowledge later on?**

Adela: It's good for your soul (laughs)

Yeah (chorus)

**Beata: Such a Polish word, isn't it, Soul!**

(laughs)

**Beata: Can you explain that?**

Adela: I think it's called when our studies lasted for five years, some years ago I did xxx in such mode. It was called the fifth year syndrome. You are so frustrated and you're so afraid that you learnt all those things and now you actually know nothing to guide your through your life. I think it's it really makes you a better person or more intelligent person

Celina: A wise person

Chorus: (laughs)

Celina: You can talk to people about different kind of books, different genres and different era yes, literature eras so it's also good to know books from different different different periods yes

Matylda: But it's a kind of frustrating when I don't know there are some people who during a meeting or something and they talk about some books and we want to talk about let's say our books in inverted commas and there are no people who know the books so It's a kind of I don't know sad maybe 'cos we are we have no person no people to talk with about the book. It's only the people from the studies that we can exchange, share  
...not interested

Adela: I've got friends from English department from here and from xxx so we talk about books

Matylda: I don't mean let's say from other philology, but Polish or I don't know or let's say technical studies so

**Beata: So do you think that makes you a closed group or**

Matylda: Oh it depends it depends on the people

Celina: 'Cos some people won't be interested in our subject

Matylda: Or our personalities

Yeah

Adela: I don't think people in general apart from arts departments read a lot, I think people don't read a lot so you don't talk about books with your friends from for example the Technical University

Celina: 'Cos they have a lot of work too so they concentrate on technical books, books which are required at the Technical University

**Beata: So do you think that makes you a different kind of person?**

Approximately 2 minutes have been deleted from the transcript

**Beata: Can I now ask you individually again to tell me, and it may sound like a naive question but I don't mind**  
(laughs)

**Beata: how reading literature or studying literature, British literature that's what I mean how studying has changed your personality. Whether it has any influence on your personality at all and if yes then what kind of influence was it?**

Maria: I must say it didn't change my personality. For reading British literature influenced my general knowledge of English let's say, influenced my general knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and Celina: Culture, English culture

Maria: this all background, and it's it is reading, widening our horizons I don't know. And I really appreciate reading but I I wouldn't not say that I feel frustrated that I cannot talk with my friends about this literature. This is just for me and of course I', really glad, I'm really happy when I can share my interests with other people, but if not, I'm not frustrated

**Beata: All right.**

Celina: The same probably. I never like reading the books that I were asked to even in my Polish lesson I like reading books that I choose and I prefer reading criminals, criminal books especially Agatha Christie. Yes, and that I really appreciate reading books written in English however as P. says reading British literature during my studies didn't change me and didn't have any influence on me. However, I really appreciate that we do read it because through reading we deeper our knowledge about the language, English culture.

Adela: I think it depends on the book. I think that Victorian novels made me calmer, more calm and peaceful, but it will all change when we go to the modernist books novels in the next year. I think it will make me more shaky inside.

**Beata: So they really have an impact on your mood?**

Adela: Yes ye they have. I recently read not British but a South African book Elizabeth Costello by Coetzee and it made me so so sensitive for I think a week. So books affect my mood, maybe not my personality

Matylda: It's something like yeah it changes my mood let's say before the exam two or three nights. It's something like oh God I hate it, while after a few days oh it wasn't so bad I like the literature so it's not like Adela said it's not changing my personality, it's changing my mood

**Beata: Do you think that you will be able to use some of this knowledge as future teachers? Or you're not planning to be teachers at all?**

(long pause)

Matylda: Yeah we are planning but let's say I have no idea what which way I could use the knowledge, while I'll be teaching I don't know in a primary school or in high school. It's it's something like for students more than for teenagers

Celina: I've never heard my teacher talking about British literature.

Maria: Never

Celina: Never

Celina: Unfortunately that's sad, it's really said because sometimes when I read something I have impression that I I'm afraid that this knowledge this time spent on reading and searching and acquiring everything will be wasted.

(long pause)

Celina: There's here lies a question who will what is the point of doing reading books on the other hand we know it's really helpful, on



the other hand it can turn out that in our future life, job whatever we will make no use of it.

**Beata: So there is a potential danger that your time spent doing that will actually be wasted?**

Yes

Mhm

Adela: But I don't think that it's wasted. Approaching this philosophically I think it's there were studies I think I've read about recently that reading novels, fiction expands you capability of emp (laughs)

**Beata: Empathy"**

Adela: Empathy, thank you, of empathy and you're wiser in terms of feelings and understanding feelings. I think maybe that is one thing.

Matylda: Yeah but let's say when we're reading while we're reading puritan literature how would we change our feelings, when there are no feelings there

(long pause)

Celina: When I'm angry I don't see any point in learning and reading those books. However they are very interesting, but I know that I won't use in my future life, my future job. Of course I could talk with girls about or with my teachers, However in my private life probably I won't use it, I won't talk about British literature and in my job probably not.

Matylda: Unless we became a lecturer here

Yes (chorus)

**Beata: I was going to ask do you think that literature should be a separate you know like you've got here English Philology, Polish Philology, do you think that literature or cultural studies should be a separate course from linguistics, for example or from I don't know teaching methods? As something that you deliberately choose to study?**

No! (chorus)

Adela: No because nobody would go there

Yes: (chorus)

Adela: People I think want to have a job and want to learn useful things. But I think that complaining about... We are complaining about everything

Yeah (chorus)

Adela: We are complaining about grammar I don't mean we here but we as students. Everyone complains about everything. I think it's not so bad as it seems

Celina: I cannot imagine learning, studying English here, learning grammar, vocabulary, phonetics without having knowledge about the literature, about the British literature. Everything which is connected with language I think should be taught here.

**Beata: So it seems that literature is almost like like a teaching tool for you?.**

Yes (chorus)

**Beata: You know another kind of exposure to the language**

Yeah (chorus)

Helena: Without literature it would be just like average language course.

Yes (chorus)

**Approximately 5 minutes have been deleted from the transcript**

**Beata: How you know your English vocabulary, what percentage of it do you think has been acquired through studying literature?**

Adela: I think that it's a lot really a lot of vocabulary, but we have this teacher of practical grammar she really taught us vocabulary

Maria: Loads of them

Adela Yes. Really. These are endless lists, I did endless lists.

Dozens pages of words in Microsoft Word, but I think that literature teaches me may many words also

Yeah

Celina: Many people who go abroad to live and they don't know language, they learn it through reading, newspapers, at the beginning newspapers, hen maybe book, but they say that the fastest way to learn a language is of course having conversations with natives, but by reading also

Adela: You there are some steps in learning first you get to know a word and then you have to repeat it and repeat it and repeat it so see it many times so by reading you see those words many times, and it's a pleasant way of learning

Matylda: Let's say I'm too lazy to check the words I'm reading so I'm only guessing what they mean by context but I don't think so that I gained or acquired too many words while reading 'cos I'm just as I say too lazy to check them

**Approximately 5 minutes have been deleted from the transcript**

## Appendix 2

### Interview 2 (edited)

**Beata: So Polish or English?**

Aniela: Up to you

Wanda: Polish will be more comfortable.

**Beata: Yes? Ok. And what will be the nature of this comfort?**

**(laughs)**

Wanda: Well, in my opinion it will be a little ... I don't know what year you are?

First (chorus)

Martyna: To speak precisely

Wanda: Even more so

So: we need a little more ...

**Beata: I see, OK. It doesn't make any difference to me.**

Martyna: Yes we are so exposed to the English language that maybe we'll remember to speak our mother tongue a little (laughs)

**Beata: (laughs) In the first year, what are your subjects and classes in the first year?**

Aniela: Literature, grammar, history, linguistics, phonetics, phonology, introduction to literary studies, *writing, reading*,

Wanda: ph-e

p-e (chorus)

Wanda: And Latin-

Aniela: Yes Latin as well

**Beata: So nothing's changed in the last 10 years. (laughs)**

Wanda: Not much

**B: Just the same. And what literature, is it introduction to literary studies or any particular literature?**

Aniela: Both literary studies and particular literature

Martyna: It's so called history of literature and introduction to literary studies as well

Aniela: for example when we're discussing various works we look for so called *imageries* and it's made simpler by the introduction to the literary studies because it's already been covered

**Beata: True. And what's your reading list like? I mean for the history of literature. It is British literature, isn't it? To begin with.**

Wanda: Yes yes

**Beata: So what's the reading list like?**

Aniela: Initially, little poems (laughs) and then it starts elegies and all

Martyna: Like Old English,

Aniela: Yeah that's the very beginning

?: And then we get bigger poems from different periods

Wanda Exactly Chaucer

Aniela: and then the 19<sup>th</sup> century and novels

Wanda: now we're still sitting in the *Victorian Age* and we've made a jump to the War Poets and we're getting closer to Elliot

**Beata: Tell me about your classes. I mean the history of literature**

Aniela: There are lectures. There's a division between lectures and tutorials. The tutorials and on Wednesday mornings, 90 minutes. And then we start a lecture.

Martyna: The lecture is 45 minutes

Aniela: This doesn't change (laughs)

**Beata: Are these classes compulsory or can you...I don't know**

Wanda: Compulsory. Tutorials are, and the lecture is more voluntary

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**Beata: And the lecture is in English or in Polish?**

Martyna: English.

Wanda: Everything is in English, apart from Latin and ph-e

**Beata: I don't really know how you get enrolled here at the university to do the degree. Do you need to take an exam?**

Wanda: Yes it was Matura

**Beata: I see. So it was down to your Matura certificates?**

Aniela: Yes. Our grades in Polish and English,

Klara: And in some cases winners of Olimpiada

**Beata: And did you have private English classes? Did you go to private English schools? Did you do FCE or something like that?**

Klara: I did I learnt also

**Beata: What level was that?**

Klara: I passed CPE

**Beata: I see OK. Well, you can't get any more advanced!**

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Wanda: The level can be drastically different, that's a fact. On the whole now. Although it is quite a complex matter, because we have people who seem to be brilliant and then their vocabulary is level with the floor. And there are people who struggle with speaking, but their vocabulary is out of this world

**Beata: I think you're talking about different learner types?**

Wanda: Definitely

**Beata: And the lectures, the fact that they are in English, is it generally a problem for people?**

Aniela: I think that with time you get used to it. And then we learn better because we pick up a lot from the teachers. That's the case with me, for example. Initially when I came here, things felt a bit odd, I think to everyone, this transition, because everything was in English. And now I understand a lot, I don't even need to translate things into Polish. Initially I was translating everything into Polish, and now it's better. It's a cool thing that it is in English. I like it.

**Beata: And can you tell me, in classes, I understand then you said little poems you were talking about things like Beowulf and so on, practically this isn't in English, but in Old English. Do you read it in the original? Or translated?**

Aniela: Translated into English-like

**Beata: I see**

Wanda: For example first things are written in Old English and then repeated in English but somewhere in Morton there was the proper original

Klara: I read a few versions just so it is easier

**Beata: I see. And that's OK with your tutors?**

Martyna: Well I must admit that I read in Polish and in English. First I read the Polish version, and then I read the English version

Klara: I think that we all cope in all manners possible.

Aniela: Yes, It would have been impossible,

Klara: Yes

Martyna: after basically a week here, to read Beowulf in original. It seems too much of a ...

?: It was a difficult start

Martyna: challenge to us, first year students in the first meeting.

Wanda: You needed to check every word

Martyna: It was emotionally draining

Klara: It does not encourage

**Beata: In that case, could you tell me what your tutorials are like?**

**Klara:** First we must read the texts at home. It is assumed that we all come prepared for the tutorials. And then we discuss different interpretations, text analysis, different stylistic devices, and then in a given context, different motifs

**Beata; I see so do you work on all the vocabulary that you don't know?**

Aniela: That's our homework, vocabulary analysis

**Beata: So that's your preparation for the classes**

Wanda: It depends on the tutor a lot. For example, xxx. She definitely assumed that we didn't know all the vocabulary, and sometimes asked us questions about that.

It depends on the tutor a lot, because when we had classes with xxx last year, then she definitely assumed that we wouldn't have known all the vocabulary and sometimes she just quizzed us. And we didn't always know.

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**Beata: So what about your exams?**

Aniela: Final exams

Martyna Only final exams, there are no mid-term tests. .

**Beata: What's the exam like?**

Aniela: There's a test part with questions mainly from the lectures about details, often small details, historically Yeah, especially from history. For example, name the author who wrote this or that. Or whether we know the reading list, for example from Canterbury Tales, which protagonist wore a flowery shirt. Things like that. And the other part is an essay on... what is it...

Martyna: Text interpretation

Aniela: Text interpretation and an essay on a given topic

**Beata: So what were the topics, for example. I mean I understand it was a long ago, but more or less**

Martyna: There were two parts in the exam in the winter session, one topic Interpretation of an Old English text, and a longer essay on something from Renaissance, and in the second one there was an interpretation of something from the Renaissance and a longer text about

**Beata: I see**

Martyna: Interpretation for example, Motives of love in the Renaissance Sonnets

Wanda: Last year there were Christian elements in Beowulf

Martyna: Or the symbolism of the Pentagram in Chaucer

Aniela: No, in Green Knight

Martyna: No, I'm sorry in Green Knight. From Chaucer, it was the symbolism of the text

Aniela: I know there was the Wanderer I had that

**Beata: Uhm, that sounds very...ambitious. So how many items do you have in the reading syllabus? How many, one per week or what**

Martyna: I can show you this list

Wanda: I don't know what list they have but we last year we had this sort of action that there were I guess 5 novels which were an obligatory read at home and they we were tested on them

Klara: Yes we've got that now too

Wanda Good luck... Pamela! – a fascinating book, fascinating (very sarcastically)

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**Beata: Now if you could tell me just in a few sentences, each of you, why did you choose to study English Philology**

Aniela: Interesting question...

Klara: I'm interested in the English language, but if I'm honest it was plan B for me. Initially I wanted to go onto something more in the area of biology and chemistry but I didn't do well enough in Matura, but my English grade was excellent so...but I like it here I wasn't unhappy

Aniela: I guess I've always known it would be English Philology because I've spoken English since I was a child. Maybe because I watched TV a lot with my granddad in English and a child picks up lots just listening. And at school always English, English was best and I enjoyed it so I think it's just love

**Beata: Next! (laughs)**

Martyna: I mean I've also been learning English since I was 6 and I've also seen my future in relation with English but I don't see it as a final destination for the rest of my life, because I'm planning to use English in other areas, I'm mostly interested in journalism, and I think I'm here so I can perfect my English and then play a different game

Wanda: Myself, in the first place I didn't want to go to Arts School (laughs) and apart from that I really really like languages and I have dreams with regards to English in particular which are slowly coming true so I simply thought I'd like to do English Philology, and apart from the literary component I do.

**Beata: So literature is a no for you?**

Wanda: No, I can't stand, I dislike, all the time I have problems understanding poetry. it's horrible. Maybe one day I'll understand it.

**Beata: OK so it's interesting you mentioned journalism because if fact that was my next question: what after English Philology. I understand it may change many times, but how do you see it today. What are your plans?**

Aniela: I want to be a dance instructor, because I'm a dancer, and to teach English to children. I like it, I already teach children to dance but I'd also like to teach English. I'm already teaching my little brother and we don't fight so it should be ok (laughs)

**Beata: Right, that sounds like a solid foundation (laughs)**

Klara: I think that my dreams will have to wait until later. And I'd like to do translation

Wanda: I terribly want to become a translator. I already am professional xxx so we'll see

**Beata: (laughs) so I understand that you don't see the literature course as a *highlight* of your studies?**

Wanda: Prose is a breeze but as I said poetry I can't stand

**Beata: And you?**

Martyna For me it's definitely linguistics. I prefer descriptive grammar, phonology and I would like to specialise in that further on

**Beata: Yes 'cos then you'll have to choose your specialisation**

Klara: I feel similar. I'm only occasionally interested in literature.

Sometimes you get an interesting novel or an interesting poem to read, but on the whole I also prefer grammar, linguistics

Aniela: Exactly, the same with me. I just can't wade through Northanger Abbey. They go to balls, mainly, and if they didn't then they decided they'd go to a ball anyway (laughs) and after that they went to a ball

Wanda: God! Have you already read Pamela?

Aniela: Yeah, she cries every other paragraph.

Klara: Pamela cries all the time

Wanda: Yes a 'dutiful daughter'

**Beata: What criteria are you, in your opinion to select your reading list? Who decided and on the basis of what?**

Aniela: Not a clue

Klara: I certainly don't know.

Wanda: I think it's about giving us a varied list

Klara: I think the professors choose and change

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Klara: I think we need to cover the canon to know what we're talking about, regarding literature.

Wanda: Definitely, this intertextuality. and then this literary studies appears, and in order to spot you really need to be familiar with the canon. It's necessary to understand what's been written later, because everything now is based on what was before, whether we want it or not.

**Beata: But from what you're saying about your future what do you need to know about English literature for?**

Wanda: What do you need any kind of knowledge for? You could be a journalist who doesn't know geography and says that Czestochowa is in Silesia, which it isn't, but gosh it's a question of reliability.

Everywhere you work, especially creatively, you will have to face many subjects and, for example on this course I've already made good use a few times of my knowledge from xxx, and this is by no means an artistic course. You can't choose a narrow discipline.

Aniela: And apart from that if you're in touch with the English language you're also dealing with English culture so we rather need to know the history of literature, and the topics from it.

Martyna: I don't know it I'll ever make any use of John Donne's metaphysical, poetry, but it certainly develops our minds

Klara: Maybe you come across, ohm I forgot you don't want to be a translator

Or maybe when you're talking to a poet., then you can have a conversation

Martyna: Maybe, but I think it's also important that we have contact with the language, vocabulary, and mostly this intellectual development, because it's not only about putting oneself in the position to earn money later, but also to generally develop your knowledge.

**Beata: Is that very important on this course?**

**Chorus: yes!**

**Beata: In that case, how would you define what you called 'intellectual development'? How would you define an intellectual?**

Klara: I think it's someone developed in different directions that can hold a conversation with anyone on any topic. Of, course, you also say, 'good at everything, good at nothing, but someone who has their own particular interests which they work on more, but you cannot neglect others, you need to know something about everything.

**Beata: Do you all agree?**

Chorus: yes!

**B: And this if important on a professional or personal level?**

?:Hmh

Aniela: I'm not sure if we can choose between them

Martyna: Are they mutually exclusive?

Aniela: Exactly

Martyna: I mean I'm a perfectionist. It may be a drawback for me, I think for sure because I can't learn sliding over things, and I want to know a lot so as a result it takes me a lot of time to study through different topics. If I get interested by something, I want to explore every topic so I think this is certainly a mixture of professionalism, but also intellectualism because I'm interested in many things. So all in all I wouldn't say that they are mutually exclusive

Aniela: I think they can be linked. If you develop intellectually in all directions than you will become more professional as well

Klara: Well, I'm a citizen of the world

**Beata: Meaning?**

Long pause

Klara: I don't know, a person who can identify a little bit with every nation

**Beata: I see**

Klara: Maybe not identity, but is more interested, that's a better word.

**Beata: Is that how you feel?**

Klara: Yes. I think yes, I'm interested in various nations and I like to know what's going on in the world

Martyna: I think it's someone who is an enemy to xenophobia.

Someone open to other nations and can talk to anyone regardless of their origins, not conservative and generally not phobic, feels good in any company, learns foreign languages. I think that's it.

**Beata: Do we all agree?**

Wanda: Why not (laughs)

Teresa: In the sense of being curious, unafraid of getting familiar with other cultures and other nations, you don't believe any stereotypes or prejudice, at the same time, admire your home country. Be faithful to her ideals, and the same time be tolerant.

Martyna: I mean I think that in today's world there are two camps, it seems like either someone is cosmopolitan or chauvinistic (laughs)



**Beata: And I am was thinking about people who are as you said at the very beginning very exposed to English, who study English and in English, and it all filters through to your world, I mean your world is I think at the moment, I suspect you have some native speaker teachers here, maybe you meet them outside the university, does that change you?**

Aniela: No I don't think so

Martyna: No

Aniela: I go back home and we speak Polish with my mum so everything is ok. My flat mates speak Polish. I think that this '*being English*' switches off at some point and you're yourself again.

Martyna: Language is only a tool which we use at university. It could be German or Italian instead, or French. If you study maths then you're in the maths world at university so no it's not a threat

**Beata: So it seems to me that you switch without great difficulties**

Teresa: For example, I can think in two languages, because I used to live in France until I was 10 and essentially I feel like I have two homelands France and Poland and I know English well so I can think at the moment in any of these languages. And for me this is not a problem.

Martyna: We all have different interests. Some would only read from what I can see, stooping over a novella, but there are some that are interested in many things and you can talk to them about many topics

Wanda: Do you mean novella or novel?

Martyna: Novel novella novel, of course

**Beata: Well I suppose you could do the same with a novella, good code-switching (laughs)**

Martyna: That's it. False friends. I mean a novel.

**Beata: Talking about novels, do you feel that English literature is an important subject on your course?**

Klara: I haven't figured it out yet

Wanda I don't think there are strong divisions, but generally, from the top there's definitely a push towards literature. That's for sure, and this year when specialisations were being open, there were few takers for literature and people who wanted to other things were forcibly moved to literature

**Beata: Forcibly?**

Wanda Yes. But, among students I don't think there are such divisions

**Beata: Do you agree?**

(pause)

Aniela Hard to tell

**Beata: Hard to tell ...**

Wanda: I think a lot of staff here specialise in literature.

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**Beata: And another thing, apart from knowledge 'cos you were thinking about knowledge which is needed to be and function professionally and intellectually and so on, do you think that you are, having done your history literature course, do you feel that you've changed as people?**

Klara: No

Aniela: No (laughs)

Aniela: maybe in the sense that greater knowledge results later in us being able to detect more intertextuality in texts that we read later. But as people or in any other way no.

Klara: I think that we're not in the circles of people I mean we live in Poland and we're a minority who knows English literature and it doesn't have an impact on our lives

Wanda: Well, I think it does a little.

Klara Yes?

Wanda: Yes, because with every book, with every literary period, for every author, the point of departure was a different set of values and features, and at least for me this is very interesting. And now coming back to the wretched Pamela, well then you can obviously laugh, but really, for someone at some point that book was a very serious matter, and it was contemporary and relevant and that is terribly interesting.

Klara: Yeah if you're interested in that sort of thing, but I don't think it has an impact on us, for example, it's not Polish literature, but at school we read Werther and then young people have this phrase 'what a Werther' to describe someone, but that's just in a very small environment.

Martyna: I mean I think I've become more confident communicating in English. I guess that's the only thing.

Klara: But this is I guess thanks to the whole course...

Aniela: Yes

Klara: not just literature

Martyna: Sure, but here in literature there were lots of vocabulary in particular

Wanda: Still, for me literature is conducive to thinking about author's motives to write something

Martyna: I mean that's maybe something that I already observed in high school, when I was getting to know various books, I had different reflections, but now I think I don't have too much time for philosophizing (sarcastically), but I'm more after the language. Unless you tie your future more with literature

Wanda: God forbid, but this does simply transfer onto your life. Normally when I'm listening to the radio or something, I just absorb what is said, but now I try to think about that critically. I think about the motivations behind what's said. That does change a lot after all.

**Beata: In your classes, I don't know what they're like, how do you arrive at your interpretations, whether you analyse things yourself or is it given to you? from a book?**

Klara: I think we're given as many ideas as possible in classes, then we try to choose the most probable ones, we discuss all of them.

Martyna: Well, when it comes to poetry it's most commonly an interpretation from footnotes (laughs) rather than our own ideas

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Teresa: I mean last year I was terrified by the number of 5 novels which we had to read in a short time, and by old English or something written in the 17th century so you read it much more slowly than something written nowadays.

**Beata: I see. But were you happy anyway about your literature exam grades?**

Wanda Yes I was very happy I failed!

**Beata: Did it change your attitude to literature? Or**

Wanda: Well, I'm very talented in not getting the right interpretations, and unfortunately I didn't notice the elements of mythical love in John Donne, which we didn't discuss in our classes. And the exam was marked by another tutor. Touché.

**Beata: How likely is it that one day you'll have a conversation with someone, either here or in the UK for example about let's say Alexander Pope?**

Aniela: He was very short, wasn't he, 5'3" or something

**Beata: (laughs)**

Aniela But I don't know, but I don't really know about other countries, but I'm not sure if in the UK or USA they put so much emphasis on reading canons as we do here. I don't know because I haven't been to a university there so I don't know. Because, it's often the case that we here in Poland learn much more than they do in other countries where, for example, one of my teachers said that in Norway they all work with the computers and the teacher is doing the lesson, but they all sit in chat rooms. And that's what it's like there. So in many cases we know much more about the culture and history of a given country than the people who live there.

**Beata: Have you heard other comparisons like this one with Norway?**

Klara: Well, as far as reading lists and canons I also think that in Poland there's more emphasis on that. I lived for a few years in Greece, more than 10 actually so I know that in their school system there's little to read. For example they have something in Ancient Greek and they read it all year and about contemporary books – I haven't heard that they do them. I don't know why. I know that their educational system is at a lower level.

Teresa: For example. I used to know some girls from Turkey on Erasmus exchange and although they'd been learning English for 4 or 5 years their English was really quite poor.

Wanda: I think that's standard for most people who come here on Erasmus exchanges.

**Beata: What is?**

Wanda: Their English is really poor, really poor. That is we now girls from Hungary, they're great, but if there's someone from Spain, Portugal or Italy, well, it's not cool. For example, we had a student last year, he was in his fifth year and said that he wanted to be a teacher, but his level of English was too low I thought.

**Beata: What do you think, why is that?**

Teresa: Evidently their universities are on a lower level. Or there's no emphasis on language skills, but more on the knowledge of literature or grammar. There's more theory than practice.

**Beata: Over there?**

Teresa: Yes over there.

Aniela: Or they have fewer classes and fewer things to learn. That's what I think.

**Beata: Is that a good feeling, to think you're better or maybe more educated. Is that something pleasant? I'm assuming you have feelings about that, and I'm curious**

Wanda: Well, it is cool to think that from time to time (laughs)

Aniela: I think not in the sense that someone is better, because you'll always find someone better than you. You think I'm so great and then comes someone better, and then what you think I'm not that great after all, and you bury yourself under a pile of books. I think it works as something that you're not better than someone, but better language wise so I'm able to watch a film without dubbing, or or I don't know I can have a conversation in English fluently and I don't have to pause every second because I have a gap in my memory, what does this word mean or how do I say that. I think that's the way to see it. I do.

Teresa: Or also because you can easily read books in the original, without looking words up in a dictionary.

Klara: And that's great.

**Beata: So it's a practical advantage? And coming back to Klara, when you said that in Poland we perhaps put more emphasis on literature than anywhere else. Why?**

(long pause)

Martyna: Ha ha

Aniela: But generally, or only on English Philology?

**Beata: Well, I don't know if you're talking about something more general or just English Philology?**

Teresa: Generally

Klara: Well, that's exactly what I don't know.

Aniela: In schools, for example there's lots of literature from Pozytywizm. Or war literature, I think that's because of Poland's turbulent past, for sure. And that's why they want children to be familiar with that, but on the other hand let's think about history at schools. We learnt for a whole year foreign histories, reasons, outcomes of I don't know some strange wars in France, or or the shaping of Germany throughout centuries and so on, and then when it came to the second World War we ran out of time. Did you have the same thing?

Teresa: Yes

Martyna: We never got to the Second World War, throughout my entire education

Aniela: Exactly

Teresa: I go to 1989 in high school because I chose history as my main subject, but in my primary and secondary school we only got to the first world war.

Aniela: So paradoxically there's no time for our history.

Martyna: In Polish education it's more important how many lovers Henry the VIII had...

Wanda: But it's so fascinating (laughs)

Martyna: Yeah it's much more important to know what happened in 1253 than contemporary history although we talk about it most in our lives.

Klara: I don't think it's more important, but teachers first cover everything in detail and then they run out of time

Martyna: Well yes, but it seems to me that some things, periods, although it's tradition, it's history should be skipped or covered quickly, because they're not crucial.

Aniela: I think that all in all there should be less focus on foreign history in ur schools. Children learn that and memorise dates from wars in other countries

Martyna: I mean I'm sorry, but I can say that for me all history is important,

Aniela: Yes

Martyna: but the focus should be on things starting in the 18th or 19th centuries, because that's what matters to us

Wanda: I must confess that we didn't have international history at all. Not at all. OK, in my school all the non-artistic subjects were hardly there so in theory we got to 1989 but....

Aniela: But it should have something to do with Poland, to help us contextualise things

Martyna: True, 'cos I remember more about Phoenician wars

Aniela: Hannibal

Martyna: than the second world war

Teresa: But you often discuss contemporary history in social sciences, it has something in common

Martyna: Not much, not much

Wanda: I didn't have social sciences

Teresa: We did Polish post war history in social sciences

Klara: I didn't have that

Teresa: But perhaps that was because my class profile was legal

Martyna: I mean I was in such group p[profile but I don't recall much time designated there to history, unfortunately. Only the Constitution

**Beata: But I don't know is it some kind of our Polish ambition to to have knowledge about the whole world, or not to focus on ourselves...**

Klara: I would suggest that it's because of Polish turbulent history, repressions, partitions, and this is reflected in literature, and then it became important, and then it transferred onto everything

Martyna: I think these are school programmes which haven't been thought through enough. They stick to old things. Somebody laid out a programme one day and we're still following. Today's world moves so fast that they need to be revised.

Klara: I think that's good, because with these people from abroad who have had revised programmes, well, you can't talk about anything much with them. They don't know, in fact. They will ask when the second world war started, a lack of basic information

Martyna: But but if these

Klara: Or they ask, in fact, often older people for example in Greece they asked about absurd things, for example if we have sour cherries in Poland, or balconies (laughs) and this really is horrible. Complete ignorance.

Aniela: They're surprised we have computers

Klara: Complete ignorance. They think we live here in wooden huts, somewhere in the country. All of us.

Teresa: Yes and some Americans thought that there were polar bears in Poland because they thought that *Poland* had something to do with *North Pole*

Aniela: Or they don't even know where Poland is. I think there was this TV programme, in America I guess, there was a map and Poland was placed somewhere near Iraq or something.

Teresa: Or this standard question if the schools get closed down if it's snowing. I've been asked that a few times.

Wanda: It would be great

Aniela: Unfortunately not

**Beata: Well, they do in England (laughs)**

Wanda: Even Shakespeare placed Checks near the see once.

Aniela: Well it happens, he was allowed to, I mean people will forgive him, because he's really famous

Wanda: That is if he existed at all

**Beata: But, all that you're saying, it sounds really I don't know I can taste something bitter in that. As if felt you deserved more recognition, or maybe feel a little ignored**

Klara: Because, that's true in my opinion.

Aniela: But let's not cry (laughs)

(laughs)

Aniela: Let's hang on there girls

Klara: It's true

**Beata: So let's go back to what you were saying that the general level of education of Polish students, or the level of requirements in Polish schools is high. What can we get out of this?**

Aniela: That's where the difficulties begin because we on the whole are better educated than students in other countries, but we must go abroad very often, our Polish graduates to work there and that is the paradox, that we have high requirements, but prospects for some professions or some people are none.

Martyna: I mean I think nobody's teaching us organisational skills or mobility and this is what it's important on today's market, because sometimes our lack of knowledge can be re-touched by other skills, communication skills, career ladder climbing skills. That's something nobody pays attention to, because it's supposedly more important to be able to analyse this little text, what's inside, what metaphor, than how to use this language practically.

Wanda: Not entirely, that's what we do in oral skills here.

Martyna: OK oral skills, I'm sorry but for me so far it's just been this yellow book Oral Skills

Wanda: Yes here, but in the second year ...exactly things like that

Martyna: But it's not just about oral skills. But it's more about technology, about how to use EU programmes, nobody tells us about it. They are somewhere out there, we know that but can't they show us how to apply. We don't have these skills?

Wanda: Are you talking about English Philology?

Martyna: Yes, because I'm learning the language to use it later in a different profession, not just to be a translator or teacher. I need to get this knowledge too.

Aniela: I think that for that you need to go on special courses, technical ones, for example.

Wanda: I think so too.

Aniela: Because if, for example, because it can't be that

Martyna: Why not, for example, an announcement in English about EU courses you can apply to through our Parliament. For me this is very interesting.

Aniela: Yes, but it can't be part of our syllabus, because

Beata Allington

Wanda: Not everyone is interested

Klara: Exactly

Aniela: I wouldn't like to do that

Martyna: It could be optional, something like that.

Aniela: That's ok then

Klara: Optional would be fine.

Martyna: I miss that here, I must say. Different directions that being a teacher or a translator

**Beata: I was thinking about yes I thought that the fact that you're studying interpretation of this little text with a metaphor inside is a waste of time, a little bit.**

Aniela: Not if the text is really short

(laughs)

Aniela: Maybe it'll come useful one day. Maybe my son asks me one day 'mama I don't know what this is' and I'll say 'let's see'

Martyna: But the son should follow the same route, the son also learns so to pass it on later

Aniela: Yes

Wanda: But it's all about communication. We use the language. The better we use the language, the more you can achieve

Mhm

Aniela: Yes

Wanda: And when we study literature, we get the key to understand the language.

Aniela: We add to our vocabulary

Aniela: Exactly

**Approximately 5 minutes have been deleted from the transcript**

## **Appendix 3**

### **Example of a Licencjat profile**

Sourced and translated from:

[http://www.angli.uw.edu.pl/images/Dokumenty/program\\_studiow\\_I\\_stopnia\\_2010\\_2011.pdf](http://www.angli.uw.edu.pl/images/Dokumenty/program_studiow_I_stopnia_2010_2011.pdf) (downloaded on 20.02.2010)

#### **LICENCJAT PROFILE**

On completion of English Philology Grade 1, the licencjat:

1. is competent in English at the level C1 (as per the European Council Language Level Scale)
2. demonstrates elementary knowledge in the areas of linguistics, area studies and literary studies, as well as the literature and culture of the English-speaking countries,
3. is prepared to pursue further academic studies and to undertake a master's course in the field of philology, area studies or related disciplines
4. is prepared to take professional employment in schools, offices, institutions and non-governmental and social organisations
5. is prepared to teach English at elementary level, after obtaining a teaching qualification



## **Appendix 4**

### **Example of English Philology Grade 1 degree programme**

Sourced and translated from:

<http://neo.uwb.edu.pl/ang/FA-stac-l-rozklad.htm>

(downloaded on 03.03.2010)

Degree: philology

Specialisation: **English philology**

Hours in total: 2,280

#### **Degree programme English Philology, Grade 1 studies (2009/2010)**

##### **Year 1, semester 1 – English Philology (2009/2010)**

English: 150 hours, tutorial

Introduction to Language Studies: 15 hours, lectures

English Phonetics and Phonology: 15 hours, lectures

Introduction to Literary Studies: 30 hours, lectures

History of English Literature: 30 hours, lectures

History of English Literature: 30 hours, tutorials

Introduction to Area Studies: 15 hours, tutorials

History of Great Britain: 30 hours, lectures

Physical Education: 30 hours

Latin: 30 hours, tutorials

Information Technology: 15 hours, tutorials

##### **Year 1, semester 2 – English Philology (2009/2010)**

English: 150 hours, tutorial

Foreign Language (tutorial): 30 hours

Teaching English as a Foreign Language – Professional practice:  
120 hours, tutorials

Introduction to Language Studies: 15 hours, lectures

English Phonetics and Phonology: 15 hours, lectures

Morphology: 15 hours, lectures

Morphology: 15 hours, tutorials

History of English Literature: 30 hours, lectures

Introduction to Area Studies: 15 hours, tutorials

Current Concepts in Language Teaching: 30 hours, lectures

Physical Education: 30 hours

Latin: 30 hours, tutorials

Information Technology: 15 hours, tutorials

Monographic Lectures: 2x30 hours, to attend during 3 years of studies

**Year 2, semester 3 – English Philology (2009/2010)**

English: 150 hours, tutorials  
Foreign Language (tutorials): 30 hours  
Teaching English as a Foreign Language – Professional practice:  
120 hours, tutorials  
Introduction to Language Studies: 15 hours, lectures  
Syntax: 15 hours, lectures  
Syntax: 15 hours, tutorials  
History of the English Language: 15 hours, lectures  
History of American Literature: 30 hours, lectures  
History of the USA: 15 hours, lectures  
British Studies I: 30 hours, tutorials  
Methods of English Language Teaching I: 30 hours, tutorials  
Introduction to Psycholinguistics: 15 hours, lectures  
Intercultural Education: 15 hours, tutorials  
Paraverbal skills – voice emission: 15 hours, tutorials  
Information Technology as a self-study skill: 15 hours, tutorials

**Year 2, semester 4 – English Philology (2009/2010)**

English: 150 hours, tutorials  
Foreign Language (tutorial): 30 hours  
Teaching English as a Foreign Language – Professional practice:  
120 hours, tutorials  
Syntax: 15 hours, lectures  
Syntax: 15 hours, tutorials  
History of the English Language I: 15 hours, lectures  
History of American Literature: 30 hours, tutorials  
History of the USA: 15 hours, lectures  
British Studies I: 30 hours, tutorials  
American Studies I: 30 hours, tutorials  
Methods of English Language Teaching I: 30 hours, tutorials  
Intercultural Education: 15 hours, tutorials  
Paraverbal skills – voice emission: 15 hours, tutorials

**Year 3, semester 5 – English Philology (2009/2010)**

English: 120 hours, tutorial, including practical grammar, 30 hours,  
tutorials, vocabulary, 30 hours, tutorials  
Foreign Language (tutorials): 30 hours  
Polish-English contrastive grammar: 15 hours, lectures  
Methods of English Language Teaching I: 30 hours, tutorials  
Licencjat seminar: 30 hours

**Linguistic specialisation Module**

*Linguistic Research Methods: 15 hours, lectures*

Beata Allington

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*Current Trends in Linguistics: 15 hours, lectures*

*History of the English Language II: 15 hours, tutorials*

*Introduction to Translation Studies: 30 hours, tutorials*

*Polish in Translation: 15 hours, lectures*

### *Literary and Area Studies Specialisation Module*

*British Studies II: 30 hours, tutorials*

*American Studies II: 30 hours, tutorials*

### *Language Acquisition and Studying specialisation Module*

*Methods of English Language Teaching II: 30 hours, tutorials*

*Applied Linguistics Research Methods: 15 hours, tutorials*

*History of Foreign Language Teaching: 15 hours, tutorials*

*Styles and Strategies of Foreign Language Learning: 15 hours, tutorials*

*Language Skills Assessment: 15 hours, tutorials*

*Language Acquisition Theory: 15 hours, seminar*

*Micro-teaching –observation techniques: 15 hours, tutorials*

## **Year 3, semester 6 – English Philology (2009/2010)**

English: 60 hours, tutorials, including:

- academic writing: 30 hours, tutorials

- integrated skills: 30 hours, tutorials

Foreign Language: 30 hours, tutorials

Interpersonal Communication: 30 hours, tutorials

Licencjat Seminar: 30 hours, tutorials

Professional Practice: 4 weeks

History of Philosophy: 30 hours, lectures

Monographic Lectures: 30 hours

### *Linguistic specialisation Module*

*Current Trends in Linguistics: 15 hours, lectures*

*History of the English Language II: 15 hours, tutorials*

### *Literary and cultural studies specialisation Module*

*History of American Literature II: 30 hours, lectures*

*History of American Literature II: 15 hours, tutorials*

### *Language Acquisition and Studying specialisation Module*

*Methods of English Language Teaching II: 30 hours, tutorials*

## **Appendix 5**

### **Examples of History of English Literature course description**

Sourced and translated from:

<http://www.maius.umk.pl/ang/?pid=2>  
<http://neo.uwb.edu.pl/ang/FA-program.htm>  
(downloaded 19.10.2010)

*Blok literaturoznawczy i kulturoznawczy*

Introduction to literary studies - lecture

***The aim of the course presented to the first year of Modern Language Philology is to introduce elementary concepts and problems related to the understanding and interpretation of a work of literature***

*History of English literature I – lectures and tutorials*

An extensive overview of the chronological development of English prose, poetry and drama from Old English to contemporary, will be presented during lectures. Emphasis will be put on the characteristics of literary periods and genres as well as on discussion of canonical English literature, which has shaped English, American and world culture. Tutorials have been designed to give the students an opportunity to analyse and interpret prose and poetry. Participants are to master elementary terminology used to discuss literature and practice their analytical and interpretative skills.

The course aims at presenting subsequent stages in the development of English literature. The lectures present the historical background and periods and illustrate the most important trends in the shaping of English literature, from early Medieval to contemporary works. Theory teaching methods.

Selected sources:

Jerzy Strzetelski et al. 1987. *History of English literature, chronological tables*. Warszawa: PWN

David McDowall. *An Illustrated History of Britain*. Longman-Pearson Education

The lectures are supplemented by tutorials with similar themes. The series of lectures conclude with an exam.

## **Appendix 6**

**Examples of History of English Literature course topics and reading lists**

*Courses: History of English literature*

**The type of the course:** Lectures and classes

**Course completion requirements:** written examination

**Semester:** 1-2

**Number of hours:** 2

**ECTS points:** 14

**Code:** 09.2 LAN 12

**Aims and requirements**

First year English Literature History course comprises the following topics:

1. Anglo-Saxon poetry
2. Middle English Literature
3. Geoffrey Chaucer
4. Medieval drama
5. The Renaissance: humanist foundations
6. Renaissance poetry
7. Edmund Spenser and his followers
8. Elizabethan drama
9. The theater of William Shakespeare
10. 17th century poetry
11. Restoration drama
12. Philosophical foundations of the Age of Reason
13. Augustan poetry
14. The origins of the novel
15. 18th century drama
16. Pre-romanticism: Robert Burns and William Blake
17. First generation of romantic poets

## 18. Second generation of romantic poets

## 20. Realist fiction

## 21. Victorian novel

## 22. Victorian poetry

## 23. Late Victorian novel

24. The aestheticism of *fin de siècle*

During both semesters students will be given quizzes and tests. There are two tests per semester, the number of quizzes depends on the teacher. Students will also be assessed on the basis of terms papers, homework assignment as well as classroom discussions. More than two absences per semester are not allowed.

**Sample examination tasks:** I. Choose one of the following topics (50 points):- The treatment of crime and punishment in the history of English literature- Evil minds revisited. The meaning and representation of evil in various literary epochs II. Answer the following questions: 1. Narrative elements in Victorian poetry (25 points). [min. 5 texts] 2. Define comedy and its elements in various literary texts (from the Middle Ages to the Victorian period) (25 points) [min. 5 texts]

**Reading list****Old English Literature**

*Beowulf*

Elegies: "The Wanderer", The Seafarer

Courtly poetry: "Deor's Lament"

Charms: "Charm for Unfruitful Land"

*The Dream of the Rood*

**Middle English Literature**

*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Canterbury Tales*

English Medieval Drama: *Everyman* or *Mundus et Infans*

**Renaissance Literature**

Thomas Kyd: *The Spanish Tragedy*

Christopher Marlowe: *Dr Faustus*

Thomas Wyatt: selected sonnets

Edmund Spenser: *The Fairie Queene* (fragments)

William Shakespeare: *Sonnets* (2, 116, 130, 136, 141, 144, 147)

William Shakespeare: *As You Like It* or *Mid Summer's Night Dream*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, (suggested reading not to be discussed in class) *Romeo and Juliet* (suggested reading not to be discussed in class), *Henry V* (suggested reading not to be discussed in class), *The Tempest*

Ben Jonson: *Volpone* (optionally, not to be discussed in class)

Philip Sidney: *Apology for Poetry*

### **Metaphysical poetry:**

John Donne: "Valediction: Forbidden Mourning", "The Flea", "Elegy XIX", "The Anniversary"

George Herbert: "The Collar", "The Pearl"

### **Cavalier Poetry:**

Andrew Marvell: "To His Coy Mistress", "The Definition of Love"

### **Augustan Classicism**

Alexander Pope: *Essay on Criticism*, *The Rape of the Lock*

### **The beginnings of the novel:**

Daniel Defoe: *Robinson Crusoe*

Jonathan Swift: *Gulliver's Travels*

Samuel Richardson: *Pamela* (fragments)

Henry Fielding: *Tom Jones* (fragments)

Lawrence Sterne: *Tristram Shandy*

One selected gothic novel : Horace Walpole *The Castle of Otranto* or William Beckford *Vathek* or Anne Radcliffe *The Mysteries of Udolfo* or Mary Shelley *Frankenstein*

### **Pre Romanticism**

Jane Austen: *Sense and Sensibility* or *Pride and Prejudice*

Robert Burns: "To a Mouse", "Auld Lang Syne", "Tam O'Shanter"

William Blake: "The Lamb", "The Tyger", "The Little Vagabond", "Holy Thursday", "The Chimney Sweeper" (both from *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*)

## Lake Poets

William Wordsworth: "The preface to Lyrical Ballads", "We are Seven", "Tintern Abbey", "Lines Written in Early Spring" "The Prelude"- part I.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge: "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", "Kubhla Khan"

*Biographia Literaria* - chapter XIV

George Gordon Byron: *Don Juan* cantos I, II, X, XI "When we Two Parted"

Percy Bysshe Shelley: "Ode to the West Wind", "The Cloud"

John Keats: "Ode to a Nightingale", "Ode to a Grecian Urn"

## **Victorian Literature**

Charles Dickens: *Great Expectations*

William Makepeace Thackeray: *Vanity Fair*

George Eliot: *Mill on the Floss* (not to be discussed in classroom)

Emily Bronte: *Wuthering Heights*

Charlotte Bronte: *Jane Eyre*

Alfred Tennyson: *In Memoriam* (selected poems)

Robert Browning: "My Last Duchess"

Algernon Charles Swinburne: selected poems

## **The pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood:**

Dante Gabriel Rossetti: "The Blessed Damozel"

Christina Rossetti: "Remember", "Uphill", "Echo"

Gerard Manley Hopkins: "Pied Beauty", "The Windhover"

## **Selected bibliography**

Abrams, M.H. 1988. *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Fourth Edition). Fort Worth: Holt, Reinhart and Winston. Inc.

Altenbernd, L. and Lewis L.L. 1966. *A Handbook for the Study of Poetry*. New York: Macmillan.

Beadle, R. (ed.) 1994. *Medieval English Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



Ousby, I. (ed.) 1988. *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*. London: Guild Publishing.

Preminger, A. (ed.) 1965. *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Sikorska, L. 1996. *An Outline History of English Literature*. Poznań: Bene Nati.

Zbierski, H. 1982. "Literatura Angielska", in: Floryan, W. (ed.) *Dzieje Literatur Europejskich*, vol. 2, part.1. Warszawa: PWN

Zbierski, H. 1988. *William Shakespeare*. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna.

### *History of English Literature Syllabus*

1. Introduction to the course: the syllabus, requirements, examination  
**Old English literature:** *Beowulf*, riddles, *The Dream of the Rood*
  - *Beowulf* as an epic poem
  - Christian and pagan elements
  - *Beowulf* as an example of the heroic ideal
  - Alliteration and kenning
  - *The Dream...* as a dream vision poem
  - Prosopopeia
  - The fusion of Christianity and Germanic heroic code (two manifestations of the Cross, the idea of loyalty)
2. **Middle English Poetry:** Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Canterbury Tales* Prologue, selected tales: Wife of Bath's Tale, Miller's Tale (from Sikorska and Fabiszak's *Anthology*)
  - The frame structure
  - *The Canterbury Tales* as a microcosm of the English medieval society
  - Humor and satire
  - Presentation of the pilgrims
  - Types of tales and their characteristic features (+ examples of those discussed in the class)
3. **Middle English Drama:** *Everyman*
  - Allegory
  - The morality tradition (contrasted with the mystery and miracle tradition)
  - The didactic aspect
  - The 'dance of death' and *memento mori* motifs
  - psychomachia
4. **Renaissance Poetry:** William Shakespeare: Sonnets no: 2, 130, 135, 136, 141, 144, 147
  - Different types of sonnets and their thematicity (polemics with convention)
  - Petrarchan vs. Shakespearian standard

5. **Renaissance Drama:** Christopher Marlowe: *Dr Faustus* (from Norton Anthology)
  - Elizabethan theater
  - The hero's self-destruction
  - Elements of morality play
  - Attitudes to ambition
  - The elements of medieval and Renaissance philosophy
- William Shakespeare: *King Lear*
  - *King Lear* as a tragedy
  - The 'error of judgment', hamartia, hubris, tragic flaw
  - Fool as an archetype of a wise jester
  - Nature in *King Lear*
6. **Metaphysical and Cavalier Poetry 17<sup>th</sup> century:** George Herbert: *The Collar, The Pearl*; Henry Vaughan: *The Retreat*, Andrew Marvell *To his Coy Mistress, The Definition of Love*, John Donne: *The Anniversary, A Valediction Forbidding Mourning, Holy Sonnets 14*.
  - The idea of a metaphysical conceit
  - The thematicity of the metaphysical poetry
7. **The Rise of the Novel: 18<sup>th</sup> Century Novel:** Daniel Defoe: *Robinson Crusoe*,
  - R.C as a symbol of economic man and empire builder
  - Features of a novel/ features denying fictionality
  - R.C. as a religious parable
8. **Romantic Poetry:** William Blake: *Songs of Innocence and Experience: Introduction x 2, The Lamb, The Chimney-Sweeper x 2, The Tyger, London*.
9. **The Lake Poets:** William Wordsworth: *We are Seven, Lines Composed a Few Miles upon Tintern Abbey, The Daffodils*. Samuel Taylor Coleridge *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*
10. **Romantic Poetry:** Percy Bysshe Shelley: *Ode to the West Wind*, John Keats: *Ode to a Nightingale, Ode on a Grecian Urn*.
  - Thematicity of Romantic poetry
  - Innocence and experience, symbolism and visionary elements
  - Biblical imagery in Blake
  - Wordsworth's perception of nature and the role of a poet and poetry
  - pantheism
  - Coleridge's symbolism and imagery, the role of a poet, form and structure
  - Ballad, crime – punishment – redemption scheme
  - Shelly's imagination, idealism, perception of beauty and revolutionary ideas
  - Keats's cult of beauty
11. **Victorian Novel:** Emily Bronte: *Wuthering Heights*
  - The role of nature and setting
  - Romantic and gothic elements
  - The structure of the novel

- Violence of manners, eccentricity of characters and extraordinary human passions
  - Heathcliff as a type of a hero
  - Elements of gothic novel
12. **Victorian Poetry:** Lewis Carroll: *Jabberwocky*
- The idea of a nonsense poetry
13. **19<sup>th</sup> Century Fiction (Aestheticism):** Oscar Wilde: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*
- Wilde's attitude towards life and art in *fin de siècle*
  - The question of evil
  - aestheticism
14. **Modernist Poetry:** T.S. Eliot: essay: *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, poetry: *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, W.B. Yeats: *The Second Coming*, *Sailing to Byzantium*.
- The idea of objective correlative,
  - T.S. Eliot's views on poetry, literary competence, role of a poet
  - Yeats's treatment of past and tradition
15. **Modernist novel:** James Joyce: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*;
- The role of epiphany
  - Bildungsroman/ Künstlerroman genres
  - The artist as self-exile in *A Portrait of the Artist...*
- Virginia Woolf: *A Room of One's Own* ch.6, *To the Lighthouse*
- A break with a traditional Victorian novel
  - Feminism
  - The process of artistic invention
16. **Post-war drama: the Theater of Absurd:** Samuel Beckett: *Waiting for Godot*.
- Extreme isolation and inertia
  - Metaphysical despair
  - The theater of the absurd
  - Symbolic elements
  - Insufficiency of lg and the nature of communication
17. **Postmodern Fiction:** John Fowles: *The French Lieutenant's Woman*,
- Victorian novel as an archetype
  - The role of the author and the reader
  - The effect of multiple narrative perspectives and endings
  - The features of a postmodern novel, e.g. the role of the author, reader, the role of history etc.
18. **Postcolonial fiction:** Salman Rushdie *East West (The Courter)*, Hanif Kureishi *Love in a Blue Time (My Son the Fanatic)*
- Immigrant experiences in England
  - The problem of minorities
19. **Postmodern fiction II:** Julian Barnes *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters*
- High and low literary genres
  - Meanings of the title
  - Intertextuality
  - Postmodern techniques

- Vision of history/story, metanovel

Additional reading (obligatory for the exam):

1. **18<sup>th</sup> Cnetury Novel II:** Jonathan Swift: *Gulliver's Travels IV PART*

- Swift's satirical techniques
- Reason and unreason in G's Travels
- The clash of mankind and the Wise Horses
- Satire on mankind
- Features denying fictionality of the book

2. **Romantic Novel:** Jane Austen: *Mansfield Park*

- Manners and morality
- Love and marriage
- Problems of the times

3. **Modern Novel:** Joseph Conrad: *The Heart of Darkness*, Chinua Achebe vs. E.W. Said: criticism of Conrad,

- The exploitation of the natives by white colonizers
- Degeneration of civilization
- The symbolism of the journey
- Racism

**Additional sources and Reference books:**

Abrams, M.H (ed.): *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vols. I & II, 2001.

Allen, Walter: *English Novel*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1995.

Bałutowa, Bronisława: *Powieść angielska XX wieku*, Warszawa: PWN, 1983.

Esslin, Martin: *The Theatre of the Absurd*; London: Pelican Books, 1961.

Ford, Boris (ed.), *The Pelican Guide to English Literature* (vol. 1-5), Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1986.

Fordoński, Krzysztof: *An Anthology of English Literature*, vol. III, Poznań: Rebis, 1999.

Krajewska, Wanda (ed.) *English Poetry of the Nineteenth Century*, Warszawa: PWN, 1984.

Mazur, Zygmunt -- Teresa Bela (ed): *The College Anthology of English Literature*; Universitas, 1997.

Nawrocki, Gerard: *An Anthology of English Literature*, vol. II, Poznań: Rebis, 1999.

Sikorska, Liliana -- Jacek Fabiszak: *An Anthology of English Literature*, vol. I. Poznań: Rebis. 1999.

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Zbierski, Henryk : *Historia literatury angielskiej*. Poznań: Oficyna Wydawnicza Atena, 2002.

## **Appendix 7**

### **Sample of literature exam questions for the Licencjat degree**

Sourced from:

[http://ifa.amu.edu.pl/fa/Full\\_time\\_courses](http://ifa.amu.edu.pl/fa/Full_time_courses)  
(downloaded on 19.10.2010)

#### **GRUPA II: LITERATURA**

##### **Literatura Angielska**

Koordynator: Prof. dr hab. Liliana Sikorska

1. Drama and theater from the Middle Ages onwards.
2. Realism and the novel from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards: major novelistic types and their rewritings.
3. Medieval beast fables, Augustan poetry of nature, Romantic concepts of nature, Victorian poetry of nature.
4. Authors and Narrators in poetry and prose.
5. The fate of romance from the Middle Ages to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
6. Postmodernism in literature and culture.
7. Major trends in 20<sup>th</sup> century drama and theater.
8. Cultural background of the Renaissance, The Puritan Ages, The Restoration and Romanticism.
9. Social aspects in the literature of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
10. Literary experiments from the Renaissance until the 21<sup>st</sup> century

## Appendix 8

### Example of a weekly timetable for first year students

Sourced from:

<http://info.filg.uj.edu.pl/ifa/index.php/studia-i-studenci/studia/98>

(downloaded on 01.08.2010)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8.00-9.30	Knowledge about British Literature - lecture			English - Writing	
9.45-11.15	Knowledge about British Literature - tutorial	English - Pronunciation	English - Pronunciation	Physical Education	Knowledge about Language Learning and Acquisition
11.30 - 13.00	English - Structures	Additional Language			
13.15 - 14.45	Latin		English - Conversation		
15.00 - 16.30		Knowledge about Language			Creative Writing
16.45 - 18.15	English - Conversation				
18.15 - 20.00	Theatre workshop (March)	Theatre workshop (March)	Theatre workshop (March)	Theatre workshop (March)	Theatre workshop (March)